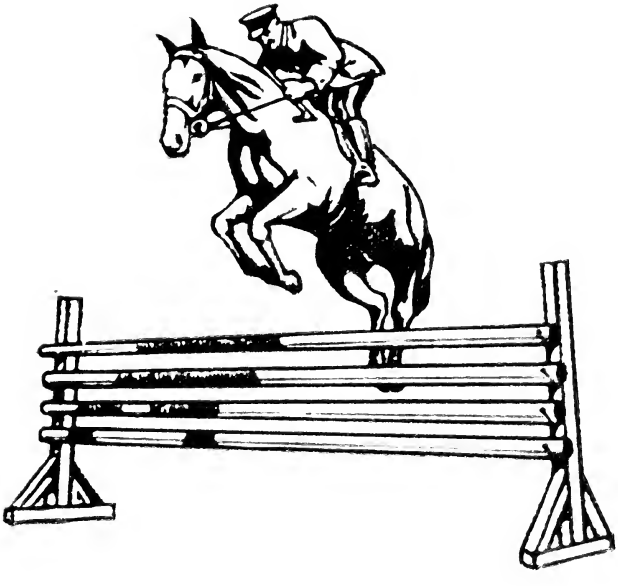
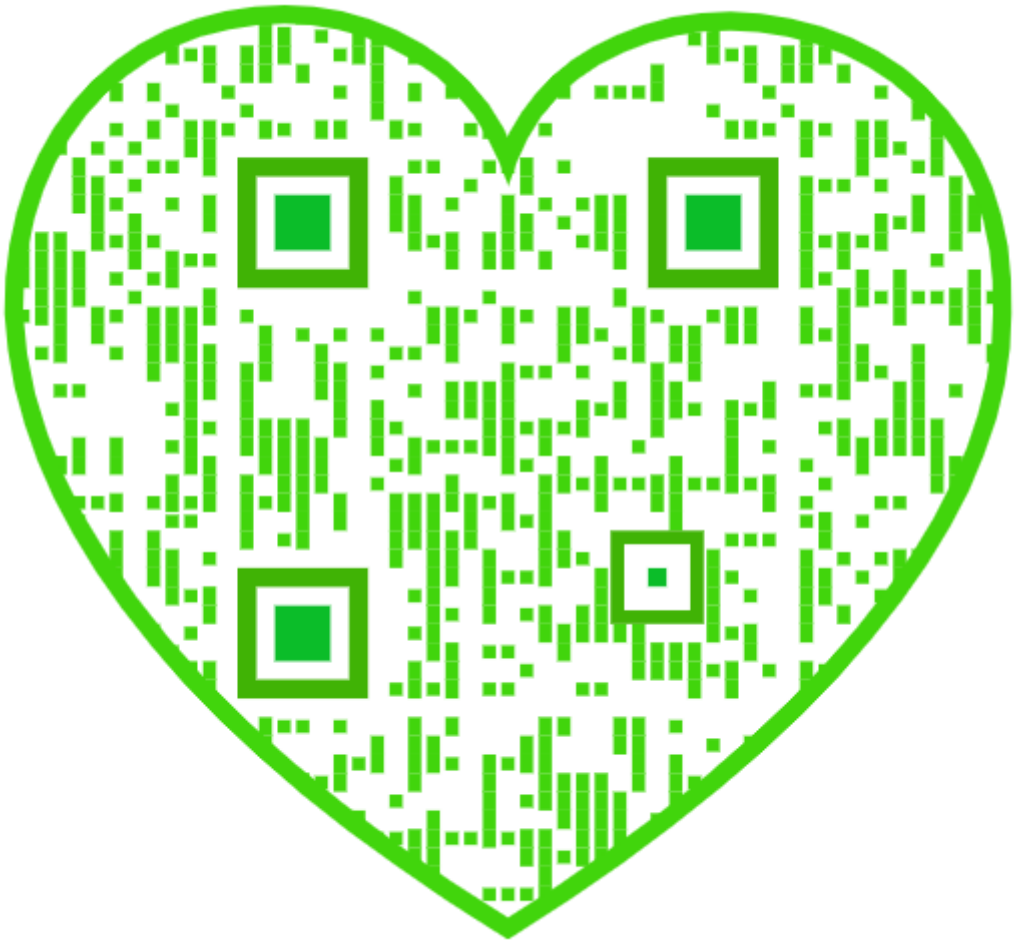
HINTS ON HORSEMANSHIP



LIEUT.-COL. M. F. McTAGGART D.S.O.



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HINTS ON
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Lieut.-Colonel M. F. McTaggart's b.g. "Surprise."
International Horse Show, New York, 1913.

HINTS ON HORSEMANSHIP

BY LIEUT.-COL.
M. F. McTAGGART, D.S.O.
(5th Lancers)

WITH FRONTISPIECE

PHILADELPHIA
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
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Printed in England

TO MY OLD "CHIEF"

GENERAL THE HON. SIR JULIAN H. G. BYNG

G.C.B., K.C.M.G., M.V.O.

THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED

PREFACE

JUST before the commencement of the war, I started, through the courtesy of the editor of the *Field*, publishing a series of articles on horsemanship. This series was rudely interrupted by the outbreak of war, and my military duties precluded my taking any further steps for a considerable period. But after fighting in France continuously for nearly four years, it was my fate, through the fortune of war, to be taken prisoner. Taking advantage of the enforced leisure at my disposal, I have passed many an otherwise weary hour in compiling this little volume. If it gives any of my readers as much pleasure to read as it has given me to write, I shall be fully rewarded; but it is more than I can hope that they will finish the last page with as much regret as I felt on the conclusion of my task.

Now that peace has been declared and we can, once more, resume the pleasures of the hunting field, of racing, polo, and the show-ring, I am at last able to place my MSS. into the hands of the publishers.

THE AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE

THE books which have been written on horses and horse management are legion, and yet, without the customary apology, I lay yet another before the public. I do so because I have long realized that much of the most interesting part of horsemanship, of training, and of ownership is as yet not fully appreciated by a large majority of the riding public. In doing so I have made no attempt to write exhaustively. Did I do so, much would be a repetition or plagiarism of other works, and that is not my intention. I have, instead, endeavoured to explain the more abstruse points in the theory of horsemanship, and to disclose continental views which, as far as I know, are not to be found elsewhere, and which I hope may prove of interest and be novel to many. Horse-management is only lightly touched upon. That is a subject in which few countries can approach and none can equal us, and there are many very valuable works already written on the subject. Also I do not deal with the early handling, bitting, and breaking in of yearlings. If I did, I would again trespass needlessly. The training of racehorses I leave to those more qualified, and my sole endeavour is to help those people who would like to ride better and straighter to hounds, who are interested in training horses to jump, and who wish to under-

stand the art of sitting a horse, and putting a horse at a fence, whether it be in the show-ring or the hunting field, or in steeplechasing. *Haute école* is a subject I am not proficient enough to tackle. It is a branch of training that is hardly known at all in this country. It is very fascinating, but lacks the practical value so dear to the heart of an Englishman. Its home is in Paris, where this form of horsemanship has been brought to its highest pitch through the energies of a few highly skilled instructors who are themselves past masters in the art. The Italians are, perhaps, more practical. At their great training school they go on the principle that a highly trained man and horse can go anywhere and do anything. A precept with which I heartily concur, and which it will be my endeavour to exemplify in the following pages.

The sketches, which illustrate the various chapters, were drawn within the gloomy walls of a prisoners' camp in Germany. I make claim to but little artistic skill, and I found the task none the easier for the absence of the usual facilities for portraying the action of a horse and rider in motion. My intention was to have them completely redrawn, but Major Gonne, R.A., who kindly consented to prepare them for the printer, considered that they should be left as they were originally drawn. This being the case, I must ask my readers to consider them as diagrams only, and not as accurate representations of either action or conformation.

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A TOAST

Here's to that bundle of sentient nerves, with the heart of a woman and the eye of a gazelle, the courage of a gladiator, the docility of a slave, and the proud obedience of the soldier.

GENTLEMEN—THE HORSE

INTRODUCTION

For well over a hundred years the inhabitants of Great Britain have had greater opportunities for riding and horsemanship generally than the continental nations, and were for many years justly regarded as the leaders in all branches of equine sport. We still have the best horses the world can produce, and there are far greater facilities for hunting and cross-country riding in the British Isles than anywhere else, and in consequence of this, steeplechasing and point-to-point racing are more the rule here than in any other country. On account of these advantages it has been customary for many of us to underrate the skill in riding and horsemanship, which undoubtedly exists abroad. It is certainly true that a larger percentage of the population of Great Britain can ride a horse than on the Continent, but a smaller percentage of riding men are so fully equipped and qualified in the essentials which make for successful horsemanship. Many people believe that continental horsemanship consists of *haute école*, and in teaching horses to perform circus tricks. This belief has a foundation in the fact that as many continental horse-lovers have but few opportunities of practising their

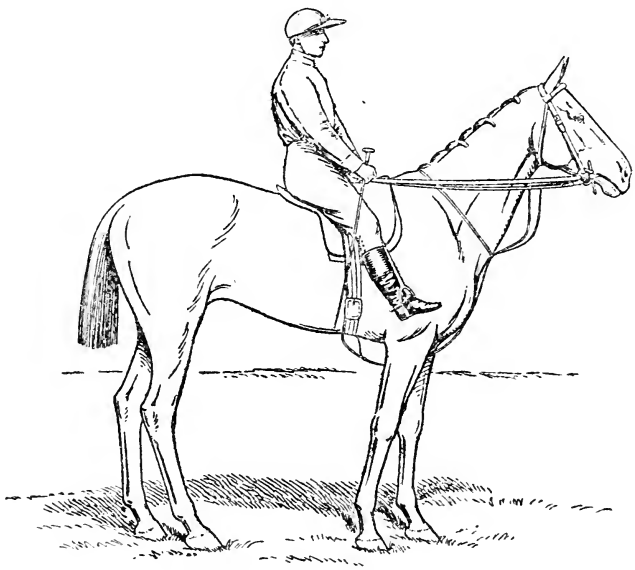
arts in the hunting field, or across country, some of them do amuse themselves in this manner. It is an extremely interesting pastime, but it in no way alters the hard fact that they do study horsemanship in a scientific manner, and we do not. Our first eye-opener was when the International Horse Show was started in 1907. Foreigners came over and won nearly every event with great ease, and continued to do so until the commencement of the war. The commentaries by all onlookers were couched in almost identical terms. They generously admitted the graceful seats of the continental horsemen, but it was unanimously written off as "trick" jumping, under unnatural conditions. "Let them come and take our fellows on over a natural country, and then we will show them how to ride," was a remark that must have been made hundreds of times, when our riders were smashing gates, breaking the wings and making the most lamentable displays, while the hitherto despised foreigner was giving most finished exhibitions of true horsemanship. That these opinions should have been so prevalent was a clear demonstration that the nation did not fully understand the principles of riding, and it is the object of this small volume to note some of the differences existing between what may be called the British and Continental principles of modern riding.

The cradle of opinion is the hunting field. Men who have hunted all their lives suppose, not unnaturally, that they must know a good deal of the

art of riding, and their knowledge is passed on to succeeding generations, unquestioned and without reserve. This method of obtaining knowledge may be described as the acme of empiricism. But theory and practice must go hand in hand. Without study we merely emphasize and permanate past errors, and no progress is possible so long as we are satisfied with ourselves. As it is, the young horseman is merely taught to ride to hounds in such a manner that he can negotiate simple obstacles, without danger to himself, his horse, or other people, but further than that it does not go. How many hunting men are willing to be photographed when jumping? How many understand the art of "putting" a horse at a fence. They will admit that it is only sometimes they can get a horse to jump a fence "off his hocks," and that whether he does or not is largely a matter of luck. As to being photographed in the act of jumping, they universally agree that it would only be on rare occasions they would be able to survive the ordeal. Now this is obviously too low a standard. A trained man on a trained horse does not fear, but desires the camera.

Speaking personally, I have been able to check many unnoticed faults by this means, and I know no better way of learning mistakes, and of studying attitude. In reference to the camera, most of us have photographs of our friends taken on horseback. They have placed themselves in the saddle in what they consider the most approved position, and are generally endeavouring to "look

their best," and yet, to the trained eye, the position they have adopted is full of fundamental errors. Below is the copy of a photograph of a very well-known rider. He was one of our foremost horsemen, and the photograph was taken some years ago. He



SKETCH NO. 1

is evidently "posed" for the camera, and is undoubtedly attempting to show himself off to the best advantage. And yet the position he has adopted in the saddle is full of bad faults. Had he realized the errors of posture that he was committing, instead of allowing it to be published, he surely would have had the photograph suppressed.

But the trouble is that he didn't know, and I most deferentially submit that the great mass of the riding public also do not quite realize the faults they commit. I do not purpose at this moment to criticize his position. I prefer to take my readers along with me step by step, and then those who have done me the honour of reading me through a few chapters, will perhaps be kind enough then to refer to this copy of the photograph. If I have been able to make my points sufficiently clear, the ineptitude of such a position in the saddle will be so demonstrated as to make further comment unnecessary. I have selected this photograph because it is very typical. If you look round the walls of your rooms or in your albums you will find many similarly posed, a fact which loudly proclaims the truth, which is that hunting experience is not sufficient to teach the arts of horsemanship by itself. It must be accompanied by theoretical study, and as much practical exercise as is possible, either in riding schools or *manèges.*

Not only do the riders require teaching, but their horses also, and it is by hard work and constant endeavour alone that our horsemanship can be improved, so that we can ride better to hounds than we did before. I am preaching no idealistic theories, beyond the reach of most, or above the ambitions of the ordinary rider. My object is to help those who wish to improve themselves in practical cross-country work. To make them ride better and straighter to hounds, with more assurance and greater safety. How great a per-

centage of an ordinary hunting field are held up by a simple post and rails because it doesn't look like breaking! How few would dare to jump a gate, under the most favourable circumstances! Even our gallant "thrusters" whose exploits inspire us with unbounded admiration, would be able to perform still greater feats with less danger to themselves and their horses, did they study the art and theory of horsemanship more. I would go so far as to say that, with a thorough schooling of both horse and rider, it is not courage so much as experience and practice that is necessary for cross-country riding. That ominous-looking post and rails which fills all our hearts with terror when riding an untrained horse, becomes most attractive and inviting when one has complete confidence both in oneself and one's horse.

It is frequently remarked that show-ring jumpers make a very bad exhibition when in the hunting field. This fact is due, not to the reason that they are show-ring horses, but because they have no experience of natural cross-country work. It is a matter that can be very easily rectified if one so desires it, and when rectified there is no doubt at all as to which is the safest mount, provided always that they have been trained to jumping on the right lines. A show-ring horse of my own which had been trained to jumping off tan, always stumbled very much when I first took her out hunting. But this was cured in the course of a very few days, when she realized the new conditions. However this may be, it is not the

purpose of these articles to advocate that all hunters should be purchased from or trained in the show-ring. Very far from it. The object is to show that by training both the horse and rider, very great improvements can be made in the capacity of both for crossing a natural country.

In speaking of cross-country work, I do not exclude steeplechasing. The riding of our cross-country jockeys leaves much to be desired, and the reason is not far to seek. Most professional jockeys start in a training stable as lads, riding exercise to start with; then doing gallops, and finally are put up in their first race. As their weight increases, and they become too heavy for flat racing, they naturally drift into steeplechasing. They seldom have any proper tuition in the arts of horsemanship. Generally speaking, they tumble into the work as best they may, and as long as they "get" the course are usually perfectly satisfied. If they fall off they blame the horse, and no one is in a position to refute their statements. A few years ago I remember one horse which was a strong favourite for the National. It did not complete the course, and the official explanation was "fell." Unfortunately, for many of our jockeys, the cinematograph now keeps careful record of the events at every fence in this race, and I purposely went to an exhibition of these films in order to ascertain what had actually occurred.

The fact was that the horse had made an extraordinarily fine leap at this fence. He cleared it as

clean as a whistle, and did not even make a "peck" on landing. But the jump had been too good for the jockey, and he had been completely jumped off.

Now, if that jockey had known how to adjust his body correctly, and had understood and studied the theories and practice of balance, such a catastrophe could not have occurred.

From the pictures that we see in the papers almost daily during the steeplechasing season, it is perfectly clear that most of our present-day riders get themselves into thoroughly wrong positions. Frequently they are grotesque, but so common are they that the public look upon them as correct. Most of our owners and trainers accept those positions as being inseparable from the exigencies of racing over fences, and the riders are never checked, nor are their faults explained to them, because in the great majority of cases neither owners nor trainers study the subject theoretically. And so we go on, riding more than any other nation, proud of our horses, our riders and our sport, but, on that very account, make no effort to improve. Those foreigners with fewer advantages, who realize that it is necessary for them to make up by study what they lack in opportunity, can now "show us the way," and it is high time that the riding public of Great Britain should grasp this sad fact, and by copying their methods, and taking advantage of their long study in the arts of horsemanship, should see that the home of riding still remains in our country, and that we should still be looked up to

as the authorities on all pertaining to the horse. Unless we keep ourselves up to date, we shall find (as we have in other branches of sport), that we have been surpassed and outclassed before we know it.

The question of training horses in riding schools is one which has been very much neglected in the United Kingdom, and in some places may be described as non-existent. Rough riders and horsebreakers there are in abundance. But when they have succeeded in accustoming a horse to hounds, and to getting over simple fences, they usually consider the education complete, and pass him on to the first purchaser as soon as possible.

The fascinating study of bridling, bending and balancing is frequently overlooked, and yet, what a pleasure it is to ride a horse so trained, even if one does nothing else beyond merely hacking along a road. It is far too common to see hunters trotting along a road with their noses stuck out, and their necks as straight as a poker. In fact I have often heard it said that "bridling" is unnecessary for hunters, and all "that sort of thing" can be left to riding masters and "faddists." It is very unfortunate that so many people hold such views. Until they have ridden a properly schooled horse, they have never experienced a quarter of the pleasures of riding. A friend of mine, who is one of the first exponents in England, was riding a very fine horse, for which he had paid five hundred guineas. I asked him what he

intended doing with so valuable a horse. "Oh," he said, "it is just a hack." I suggested it was a rather large figure to give for a hack alone, to which he replied, "It is impossible to have too perfect a hack, and he is worth every penny of it." I heartily concur. When sitting a perfectly trained horse, every stride is a pleasure, and no distance is too far. It is a joy which none but those who have ridden one can appreciate, and it is a pleasure which transcends everything else. The satisfaction and the pride one feels in riding a perfectly balanced horse, who answers to the slightest pressure of either leg or rein, who bridles equally well at the walk, the trot or the canter, and who is absolutely obedient to the will of the rider, is one which has only to be experienced to be realized.

Good training, amongst other things, means absolute obedience, and this rule is as old as the hills; it only seems to have been of recent date that it has fallen into desuetude, probably because people have lived too fast to devote either time or trouble to their horses. In the days of Frederick the Great there lived a well-known cavalry leader called Seydlitz. He had been brought up with horses all his life, and in his young days had been made by his father to break in all the horses on the estate. His father had been a great martinet, and young Seydlitz had many a rough passage in carrying out his stern orders. But his training had been very thorough, and in later life, when he got command of a cavalry brigade, put all his previous experience into perfecting the training

of his horses and men. "Disobedience," he said, "is as grave a fault in a horse as in a soldier," and he would tolerate neither.

One day he was hacking across a bridge in company with Frederick, who suddenly halted, and turned to Seydlitz. "The enemy is pursuing you, and in front is a squadron who are waiting to take you prisoner, what do you do now?" Without a moment's hesitation Seydlitz turned his horse and jumped over the parapet of the bridge into the water below! When he eventually succeeded in getting both himself and his horse back on to dry land, he returned, just as he was, wet from head to foot, saluted, and said: "Sire, that is what I would do." The bridge bears the name to this day of Seydlitz Brücke, and is a standing memorial of what can be done by training. The complete confidence of the horse in his rider, and unquestioning obedience, can be produced by systematic and thorough education only, and is something worth aiming for. Few of us can hope to attain such a standard as this, but the principle is there for all the world to see, and its undoubted advantages will help us on many an occasion if we only have the patience and the determination to put it into practice, whether it be in battle, the hunting field, or in less arduous pursuits. Many accidents would be avoided if we always have our horses under complete control, and much more pleasurable our hours in the saddle would be. The point of "jogging" is one. All horses can and will walk; it is only a question of patience.

But it is hopeless to expect a horse to walk if the rider loses his temper and jabs him in the mouth or kicks him in the ribs, every few minutes.

A horse will only walk when his mind is at rest, when he is free from excitement, and from anticipation of pain. One of the first things we look for in a trained horse is that he will walk when desired, and furthermore that he will "walk out" without breaking, at the will of the rider. The horse that will never walk is one that has been badly trained and proclaims the fact at every step. There is no exception to this rule. The most excitable horses will learn to walk when by themselves, and it requires nothing but patience to get them to do it.

There is another point upon which we are singularly neglectful. Horses should be taught to stand still while being mounted. Most horses insist on placing themselves on the crown of the road, and force the rider to mount from the side. In this way they make mounting much more difficult. A well-trained horse will allow the rider to mount from the most convenient place. Personally I like to have my horses so trained that they will stand quietly in the ditch while I am mounting them, or to be steady enough to mount them from a heap of stones or any other suitable spot. This is of great importance, particularly in the cavalry, but it is much overlooked. And yet this part of a horse's elementary training is extremely easy, and requires neither skill nor horsemanship to accomplish. This and a few other points can be so easily inculcated

that it is a pity the principles are not generally taught and adopted, and this, and the succeeding chapters will not have been written in vain, if they succeed in helping some of our keen young riders to make themselves better horsemen, and their horses better servants.

There is one more point upon which I want to dwell for a few moments, before concluding these opening remarks. I think the horse's sensibility to pain is not sufficiently realized by the majority of people, but the reason for this is not obscure. The horse has no means of expressing his feelings, neither vocally nor by facial contraction, and as long as we ourselves are not made aware of the pain inflicted, we are inclined to delude ourselves that it does not exist. I have heard it actually said that horses don't mind being branded! Yet, I once had a polo pony, an argentine, who had been branded no less than four times, and when I was singeing in the stable I always had to take this pony away. Each time he smelt the burning hair he broke out into a violent perspiration, and showed every sign of terror. He, of course, could never be singed, and I never attempted to do so.

The human faculty for reasoning is very limited. Most people can only form " a priori " opinions, and their views of life, of men and of matter are purely subjective. Most men dislike shooting hares, because they cry when hit, but have no objection to shooting pheasants. A man seen beating a dog is called an inhuman monster, but the very accuser quite probably will cut his horse to ribbands with

whip and spur in a race, and still consider himself a pattern of kindness and humanity.

So let us not deceive ourselves. Horses do feel, and they feel very acutely. They are wonderful servants, and respond to gentle treatment most nobly. Let us, therefore, not abuse their generous natures, but rather strive to bring out all that is good in them by gentle methods supplemented by firmness, courage and resolution.

I have ridden a good many races myself in days gone by, and not without some measure of success, but I can honestly look back on the past without a shadow of regret, because I have never, even when riding the closest finish, ever used the whip as a means of punishment, or inflicted any unnecessary pain as an aid to success, on an animal I have always found a true and willing servant.

THE LENGTH OF THE STIRRUP

THE balance of the body very largely depends upon the length of the stirrup, and upon its accurate adjustment, so it is essential that we understand everything connected with this somewhat complicated matter before we proceed to discuss anything else. I propose, therefore, to deal with this at some length. Generally speaking, the novice rides too long, and many such examples are to be found in our hunting fields, while on the other hand, many of our "thrusters," especially those who have ridden in a steeplechase or two, ride too short when out hunting. In the first instance the fault is due to not having studied the matter at all, and in the second case it is the result of a little knowledge, which means that they haven't studied the matter enough. We will, therefore, attempt to make the matter perfectly clear, so that all that "run may read"—and perhaps ride too!

There are three distinct categories into which the subject naturally divides itself. Firstly, there is the "long" length, to be used only when walking or going for a gentle hack on a quiet horse; secondly, there is the hunting length, which should be about two holes shorter; and finally, there is

the steeplechasing length, which should be a couple of holes shorter still.

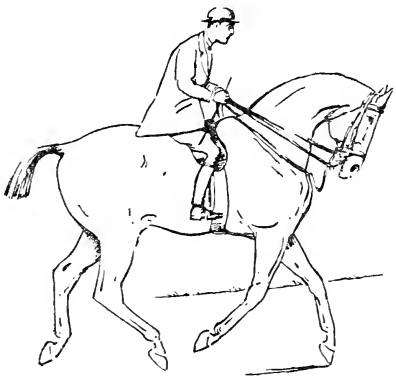
Variations between the three, naturally, often occur. These are dependent upon the action of the horse, and the particular variety of exercise about to be performed, but this fact does not affect the three main headings I purpose to deal with. This question of length is regarded by some students of such importance that one of my friends actually has small steel slips of varying thickness which he inserts on the top of the tread of the iron so as to be able to make finer adjustments than would be possible with the ordinary holes in the stirrup leather. (The holes are usually one inch apart, so that one hole makes the difference of half an inch in the length of the leather.) Personally, I do not think it is necessary to make such very fine adjustments, as any slight alteration can be made by the angle at which we carry the heel, but I mention this in order to show the value that some enthusiasts place upon having the length exactly right.

In order to understand the reason for these three distinct lengths, we must first consider the action of the horse. At a walk the horse is at no moment in suspension, that is to say, there is no moment at which all four legs are off the ground. He is merely progressing in a similar manner to the wheel of a carriage. His legs act as the spokes, and the base of his shoulders and stifle act as the hub. And as long as we only proceed at a walk the length we ride is merely a question of comfort.

There is no problem to solve; but directly the horse breaks into a trot (or even the very common "jog") we find, at once, the question is one that demands immediate solution. Directly a horse is trotting his body is in suspension for a brief period. When "jogging" the distance is probably only about half a foot in length before one foot or other meets the ground; when trotting short, the distance is about two feet. The "trot out" may be three or even four feet, depending very largely upon the action of the horse. A free horse with good shoulders will be in suspension considerably longer than a stiff animal with a tied-in action and bad shoulders. The canter, again, can vary from one foot to five, while the gallop can be as much as ten feet. When a horse is jumping, the distance he is in suspension may vary from ten to twenty or even twenty-five feet. Consequently what we have to consider when first mounting is, what are we going to ask the horse to perform, and what he is likely to perform.

In all questions where movement is concerned, it is necessary to anticipate the future, so as to be prepared for sudden emergency. For example, the track runner, when waiting for the pistol, is leaning actually further forward than he does when he has commenced the race, the reason being that he is anticipating the kick off he intends giving on the pistol sounding; and were he not in this position he would either find himself unbalanced when starting, or on the other hand, if he intended to avoid this, he would not be able to kick off

quite so hard. Or take boxing: when a man is fighting he leans his body forward, both so as to be in a position to spring at his opponent and to be prepared to meet a blow from him. No matter what branch of athletics we take, the laws of dynamics must be observed, and so even more



SKETCH NO. 2

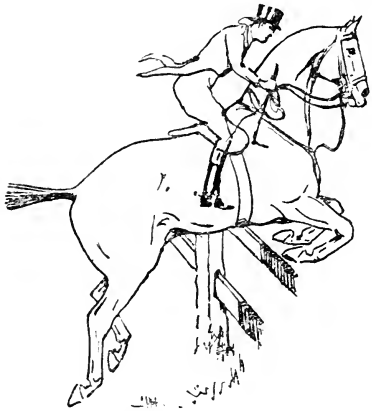
This is a sketch of a man quietly trotting in the ordinary position. The point to be noticed here is that his attitude is similar in all respects to that of the man in the next sketch, about to jump a small drain.

SKETCH NO. 3

This man's attitude, it will be seen, is the same as that of the rider in the foregoing sketch. Try it for yourself and see.

particularly in horsemanship, when the movement of the horse is, to a considerable extent, uncertain. The probable movements of the horse must be anticipated. The greater the effort, the more must the body be forward, and the more the body is forward, the shorter must be the stirrups in order to maintain the true balance of the body. For example, a man, about to make a standing long

jump of only two or three feet, will place himself in a position shown in sketch No. 3. Here he only anticipates a comparatively gentle thrust, but when he is going to make the longest jump he possibly can, then he assumes the position in



SKETCH No. 4

This is the attitude a rider should adopt when jumping a very big fence, and his position is, again, just the same as that of the man in the next sketch who is about to make a broad standing leap.

Note that although the lower part of his leg is apparently thrown back, the stirrup leather is perpendicular.

SKETCH No. 5

This position is similar to that of the rider in the previous sketch.

sketch No. 5. Now, from these two sketches it can be readily seen that as he leans his body forward, it is necessary for him to bend his knees in similar proportions, so as to maintain his balance. If we now look at sketches No. 2 and

No. 4, we will see that this position is almost similar to the attitude that should be adopted in the saddle. In the first case we see the rider as he should be when trotting. Here he only expects but a slight variation of speed in the steady pace at which the horse is going. His position is, therefore, similar to that of a man about to make only a very small standing jump. In the second sketch the rider has anticipated the very strong thrust, or propelling power, the horse put into force as he took off for the jump, and represents the position of a rider when a horse is making an exceptionally powerful leap. It will be seen that the rider's attitude is the same as when about to make as long a standing jump as possible, as depicted in sketch No. 5. In both of these sketches it should be noted that the hang of the stirrup-leather line is perpendicular. In the first sketch, where the horse is at the trot, it will be seen that the iron should rest on the foot very nearly in the "home" position. In the second it rests on the ball of the foot. This rather interesting fact is confirmed both in theory and in practice. If we look at the two sketches of the man about to jump, it will be seen that in the first sketch his heels are hardly off the ground at all, which is similar to the position of the iron when mounted at the trot, where it hangs far back on the foot. As he increases his effort at springing, *vide* sketch No. 5, he gets more on to his toes, and so, similarly, do his irons get further forward as the effort of the horse increases. In practice, when a horse is

making a big effort, the rider feels as if he were throwing the bottom part of his leg right back. As a matter of fact, he does not throw them any further back than the sketch demonstrates. But as the inclination of the horse's body is upward, it feels as if one were throwing the heel back very much further than one really is; and in doing so, it is of frequent occurrence to find that the stirrup has slipped on to the fore part of the foot, as, indeed, it must do unless it is kept "home" by a slight depression of the ball of the foot. It is also not an uncommon experience to lose the stirrup altogether on landing. This is, of course, due to the angle of descent, and when it occurs it demonstrates that the rider has been riding a little too long. If he rode a little shorter the principle would, naturally, be the same, but it would bring the knee a little more forward in the saddle, so that at the moment of which I am speaking, the stirrup would not slip right off the foot, although the tendency for it to get a little forward would still exist.

If we now turn once more to sketch No. 2, we see the rider riding at the proper length for what the horse is doing at the moment, *i. e.* trotting. But supposing the horse were to shy or suddenly jump into the air, then the rider would find himself riding too long; but fortunately these surprises are not of very frequent occurrence, and we can afford to risk them when we are riding a trained horse. But should he be riding a young horse that might do anything at any moment, then he should

certainly anticipate all eventualities and ride shorter, even when going at a walk.

We can now tabulate the following points :—

(1) The greater the propelling force, the further must the body be forward in order to counteract that force, which, without assistance, would leave the rider " behind."

(2) That in order to have the body forward, the knees must be more bent or " pointed," in order to maintain the equilibrium.

(3) That when the knees are more bent (or pointed) the stirrups must be shorter.

These three axioms, however, require a little more explanation. When we are merely trotting along a road, we do not expect much variation in a horse's stride, but when we are galloping across country we do. At any moment we may meet a drain, or hole, or a rough piece of ground, which will cause the horse to alter the uniformity of his speed. In the gallop he is proceeding by a series of bounds covering, say, six feet; when reaching a small obstacle he may clear it by increasing his stride to fifteen feet, or he may suddenly check his speed and then make a big leap. On such occasions, unless we had anticipated such eventualities, we should find ourselves suddenly " left behind."

When we are expecting the horse to make a jump of any size, we can expect him to clear twenty feet or even more, and then the force of propulsion is extreme.

The question, therefore, that we have to consider

is, how to prepare ourselves to meet this anticipated force.

It is of supreme importance, and must be thoroughly grasped before any further advance can be made in our investigations.

Some people suppose that the balance of the body is maintained by a knee grip. This is not the case. The balance of the body is maintained in riding in a similar manner to walking or running, which is by one's feet.

Let us suppose a man is sitting loosely on the back of a dogcart. Directly the horse springs unexpectedly forward, he will find himself deposited upon the ground. But if he anticipated the forward movement, he will place his feet firmly on the tailboard, and lean his body back (because in this instance he is sitting with his back to the horse). If he has done this, then when the jerk occurs he will be able to maintain his seat without disaster. This is merely an elementary law of dynamics.

Again, when a horse is trotting, cantering or galloping at a uniform speed, the action, according to the laws of motion, is similar to a man standing on an open railway truck. If the train is progressing at a uniform rate, the man in the truck has no problem to solve (apart from wind pressure). But directly the train either slows down or increases its pace suddenly, then his difficulties become apparent in exact proportion to the speed at which the train is travelling and the amount of alteration in that speed. If the train were travelling fast,

he would be foolhardy to stand bolt upright without holding on to anything, because directly the brakes were put on he would fall forward at once if he were facing the engine. Supposing he had nothing to hold on to, if he were wise he would certainly keep his body well forward, so as to anticipate the putting on of the brakes.

And so it is in a similar manner in riding. The laws of dynamics are the same, whether we ride or run, and the rules for maintaining our balance are similar.

The stirrup iron must always be looked upon as the ground upon which a man stands previous to making a jump. As a man balances himself on the fore part of his feet before making a standing jump, so must the rider balance himself on his stirrup irons before the horse makes his spring.

Consequently, the first point we have to realize is that the stirrup leather should always hang perpendicularly, so as to ensure a firm foundation for the poise of the body. A leather hanging with a forward slope (*vide* the copy of the photograph on p. 4) obviously cannot afford a moment's support for the balance of the body, because directly any weight is placed upon it, it must at once fall to the perpendicular. To have the leather sloping backward is a position that can be only maintained temporarily. It may occur in moments of extremity, when a horse is "pecking" or falling (*vide* sketches Nos. 19 and 20), but under all other conditions there is only one position, and that is upright.

To have the stirrups pushed forward is an extremely common fault. When this occurs, it means that the foot ceases to be the fulcrum. The fulcrum has then become the knee, and the body is only kept in position by a knee grip, which merely means that the rider is forced to overcome the insecurity of his poise by muscular effort, trying not only to himself but to his mount. So that before we proceed further with this discussion, it must be thoroughly understood that in riding, as well as in any other exercise, the balance of the body starts from the feet, and that the stirrup iron represents the ground upon which we stand, and from which point the rest of the body is adjusted in accordance with the rules of balance.

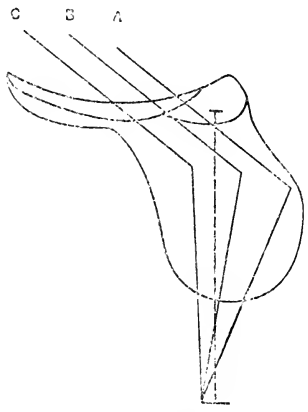


DIAGRAM I

Consequently, for all practical purposes, we must remember to keep the stirrup leather perpendicular.

Bearing this in mind, we will now see what effect the seat in various parts of the saddle will have upon the length of the leather.

Looking at diagram No. I, it can easily be seen that position A is the only one which is approximately correct. Position B is one where the rider has only slipped back three or four inches, and his

knee is almost resting on the stirrup leather itself. In position C the knee is actually behind the leather —an obviously impossible position for riding in. From this rough diagram it is clearly demonstrated that in position A the rider is riding a comfortable and suitable length, but that as his body slips back his position, as far as reaching the stirrup iron is concerned, becomes more and more difficult as the angle of the knee joint increases. Should he attempt to rectify it by bringing the iron back, the result, diagrammatically, would be as shown.

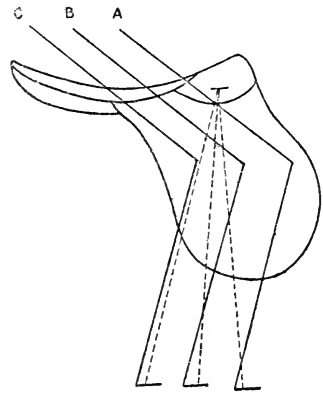


DIAGRAM II

Here the only position at which he can put his weight on to a perpendicular leather is position A. In the others it is clear that he would never be able to put his weight upon them for one moment. Directly he did so they would swing forward instantly to the perpendicular.

Consequently, as we wish to raise our knees, the body slips back in the saddle, and the stirrups must be correspondingly shortened, as the next diagram shows. If we shortened our stirrups without sitting further back in the saddle, we should find our knees protruding in front of the flap of the saddle. It is difficult to make any accurate

measurements. But, roughly, three inches back in the saddle will necessitate the leathers being shortened one inch (or two holes).

Looking at diagram III, we see an entirely different state of affairs, because the stirrups are shortened as the body goes back in the saddle. Here the knee is in each case in front of the stirrup leather. The leathers can remain upright, and the rider can in each case place the whole of his weight upon them, and by leaning his body forward a true balance can be maintained.

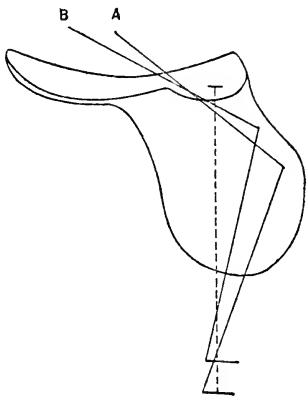


DIAGRAM III

It may be said that it is easy to lean the body forward without shortening the stirrups. This is perfectly true, but the body is unbalanced. It is a simple matter to lean the body forward when on the ground without bending the knees at all, as when making a bow. But when in this position it would be impossible to make even the smallest jump. When riding it is certainly possible to do so, but it is the attitude of a " passenger," and not of a horseman, because in that position there is neither control nor balance.

I think, therefore, that it must now be clear that in order to counteract propulsion the stirrups must be shortened in order to get the body more for-

ward; and the next point is to try and ascertain how much they should be shortened, and how we should know when they are of the right length.

All books on horsemanship advocate keeping the lower portion of the leg back. Personally, I prefer to say that the knee should be "pointed." I consider this a better way of expressing the same thing, because when one is sitting in the saddle we should feel as if our knees were pointed, and as if they were the foremost portion of our whole body. It is only when the knee is "pointed" that the full action of the muscles of the knee joint can come into play. It is by this action of the knee joint that we are able to obtain the absorption of all shock or jolt to the body. When trotting along a road, as long as the knees are properly pointed we find the knee sliding very slightly up and down on the saddle with each stride of the horse. This applies still more so at the gallop, and in its most marked degree when landing after a jump, when the shock of impact is most severe.

Bearing this point in mind, how do we know when we are riding the proper length? The answer is, that we should ride the longest length possible consonant with being able to keep the knee pointed. If we are riding too long, then we cannot get our bodies far enough forward, and if we cannot get our bodies far enough forward we are "left behind" when the thrust comes. If we are "left behind" our bodies are leaning back, and if our bodies are leaning back, provided we still maintain the proper

pressure upon the reins, we have to push our feet forward, and then our knees are not pointed. Sometimes we are unaware of the fact, and that is where instantaneous photography is of such value.

I remember once riding over some fences, and thought at the time that I had been correct. It was only when I saw the photographs which had been taken that I realized I had been riding at least a hole too long. It was quite evident that I had been "left behind," because my feet were well in advance of my knees; and a very valuable lesson it was.

One cannot always tell these things oneself. It is advisable to have a friend who will notice these points and tell you about them afterwards, but, better still, the camera is the best and surest guide.

Theoretically speaking, the iron should be kept on the ball of the foot, and in practical riding it should be so carried to a much greater extent than has been the practice of late. The balance of the body is more easily maintained, and it enables the ankle joint to be brought into play as a shock absorber as well as the knee joint, a combination which makes an almost perfect spring, so that when both are put to use, the body feels no jar whatever when, for example, one is landing over a fence. The only reason for not so holding the stirrup is that when the soles of one's boots become muddy, or the roughing is worn off the tread of the iron, there is a considerable chance of

the iron slipping off the foot, as the heel sinks to the pressure of the impact; but apart from this consideration, it is just as easy, and it is more comfortable to jump a fence with the stirrups on the ball of the foot than with them driven home.

But it requires more practice, it necessitates the leg being in the correct position, and for beginners it is certainly easier to ride with the irons " home."

It may now be asked, why shouldn't we always anticipate the possibility of the horse making a serious plunge or of his taking a big jump, and ride always as short as a steeplechase rider? The reply to this is merely a matter of comfort, both for the rider and the horse.

Riding very short is tiring, and unless we are actually engaged in galloping and jumping, it should not be maintained.

The short stirrup, as has been demonstrated, throws the seat back further in the saddle, and when we are merely walking or trotting quietly, it is not only more comfortable to ourselves to take up a more forward seat, it is necessary for the comfort of the horse. The loins are his weakest point, and it should be our endeavour to keep our weight off that portion of his back as much as possible. When coming home from hunting after a tiring day it should be a rule to let one's stirrups out a couple of holes. It is a relief to both oneself and the horse. Not so, however, when going to the meet. Neither horse nor rider are tired, and it is as well to anticipate the horse shying or giving a playful buck, and under such circumstances it

would be necessary to be riding the customary "hunting" length.

Let us now study diagram IV. The line A B represents the direction of the force of impact.

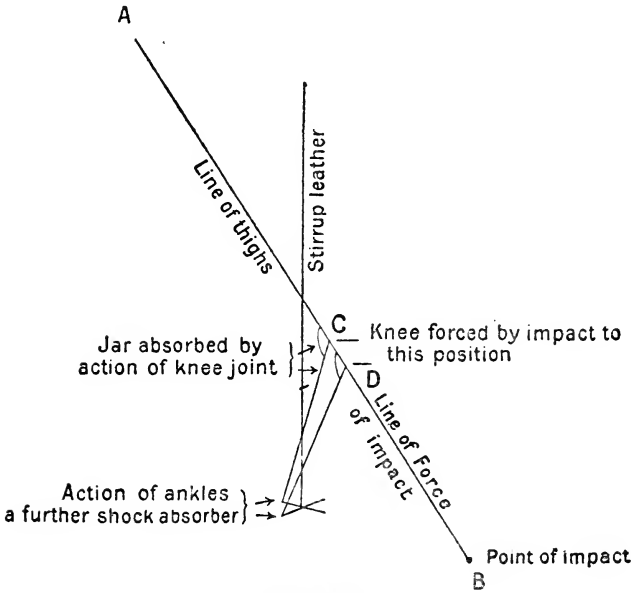


DIAGRAM IV

The point B is where the horse's fore foot meets the ground. (The principle is the same whether trotting, galloping or jumping. But as the points are more clearly brought out in the latter, we will assume the horse to be landing over a fence.) Now, it will be noticed, if my readers will look at any of the sketches or photographs representing a

horse and rider under similar conditions, that the line of the thigh is in almost exact continuation of the line of that leg which the horse is putting to the ground first. In other words, the line A B is composed of the rider's thigh as well as the horse's leg (*vide* sketch No 15).

Now, as the force of impact occurs it drives the thigh downwards along that line, causing the knee (which must be pointed) to slide from the point C to the point D. The foot should remain in the same position, taking the full weight of the body on the stirrup leather, which is always perpendicular. As the shock occurs, the muscles of the knee joint come into play, forming a spring, which absorbs all the shock, so that the body is entirely unaffected.

If the rider happens to be riding with his irons on the ball of his feet (as shown in the diagram), a second and almost equally effective spring is brought into play in the ankle joint. Here, again, as the knee is depressed, so is the heel, acting as a double shock absorber for the body.

Unless our stirrups, therefore, are short enough to enable us to keep our knees pointed at this moment, then we are riding too long. It is not a rule of thumb, but of experiment, varying with different horses under varying conditions, and the stirrups must be adjusted accordingly. But having satisfied oneself with these conditions, the stirrups then should be as long as possible.

Were I asked to express the whole question axiomatically, I would say "keep your knees pointed always."

The length of the stirrup has nothing whatever to do with the lateral measurement of the horse, as many people suppose. It is quite immaterial whether the horse is round- or flat-sided. If any of my readers still think it has, I will ask them, next time they are in the saddle, to open out their knees well from the horse's sides for a moment, and they will find that in so doing it does not alter the length of the stirrup leather in the very slightest. What does require a different length for different horses is nothing more or less than action, or in other words, the length of his stride and the distance that he is in suspension.

The next chapter will deal with the length of rein, which is certainly second to, if not as equally important as, the subject that has just been dealt with.

THE LENGTH OF THE REINS

Now that we have adjusted our stirrups, the next point we must study is the length of our reins. Although I have placed this question second in the order of importance, it has so great a bearing on the whole balance and poise of the body, that I am not really sure whether I shouldn't have placed it first. Once we have grasped the laws of balance which I have attempted to make clear in the preceding chapter, we will find that most of our mistakes will be due to having our reins too long. The rules here are very similar to those which obtain in deciding upon the length of stirrup. They are the laws of anticipation.

When we are standing still or walking, and do not anticipate any unexpected movement, then the reins may be long. That is to say, of that length which enables one to have a " feel " on the horse's mouth, and one's hands comfortably placed in front of the body. It will be unnecessary for me to dwell upon this attitude, because I have no criticisms to offer upon the method by which the reins are held when at a walking pace by most of our English riders. Like the stirrups, when only walking, there is no problem to solve. Any

length will do which is comfortable and convenient. But directly we anticipate some other movement on the part of the horse, then it is a matter that calls for immediate attention. I believe it is the custom in all riding schools to give the warning order, "Prepare to trot," whereupon the pupils are instructed to shorten their reins before the executive command is given. So far so good; up to this point we are on common ground and we all think alike. But it is when we come to more advanced stages of riding that we may possibly, up till now, have seen things from a somewhat different aspect.

As we have to shorten our reins for trotting, it appears to me a logical sequence that we should shorten them still further when about to jump. This, however, does not appear to me to have been the instruction imparted to a large majority of hunting people, judging from what I see. In fact, I know that in many cases the principle is not taught.

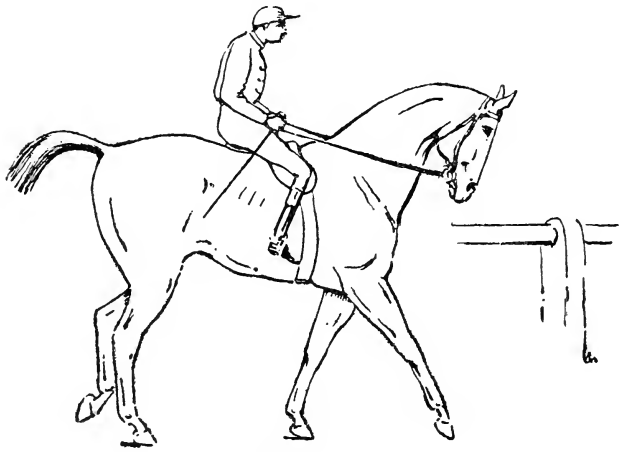
Let us for a moment discuss sketch No. 6.

Here we see a jockey walking up to the starting-post.

He is correctly balanced in the saddle for the pace he is going, and his reins are short enough to maintain a "feel" on the horse's mouth, provided, and only provided, that the horse does nothing except walk along as he is doing.

But directly the horse does anything which he doesn't expect, what is the result? If he wishes to maintain the balance of his body by throwing

it forward, he firstly has to separate his hands, because placed as they are he cannot get his body forward over the top of them, and he cannot allow his hands to go forward even in the slightest degree, because that would give the horse more rein just at the very moment he should have less.

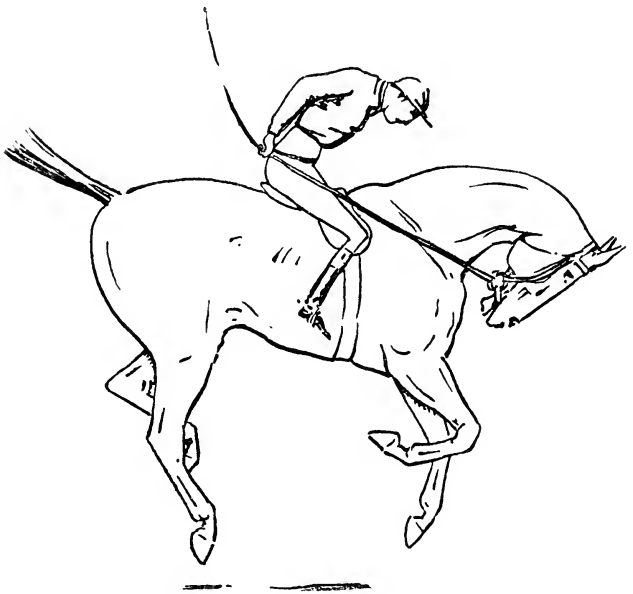


SKETCH No. 6

Any rider is quite justified in riding, when at a walk, with his reins as long as this. It is comfortable and convenient, provided you are sure your horse is not going to do anything unexpected.

Therefore his best solution is as shown in the next sketch. Here he has succeeded in throwing his body enough forward to meet the plunge the horse has given, but his hands are right back, and he is holding his reins nearly at their extreme length. Also, incidentally he is using the reins as a lever with which to manœuvre his body further forward.

In this position our friend has ceased to ride, he is merely "a passenger," and the horse can do exactly what he chooses, until he has gathered



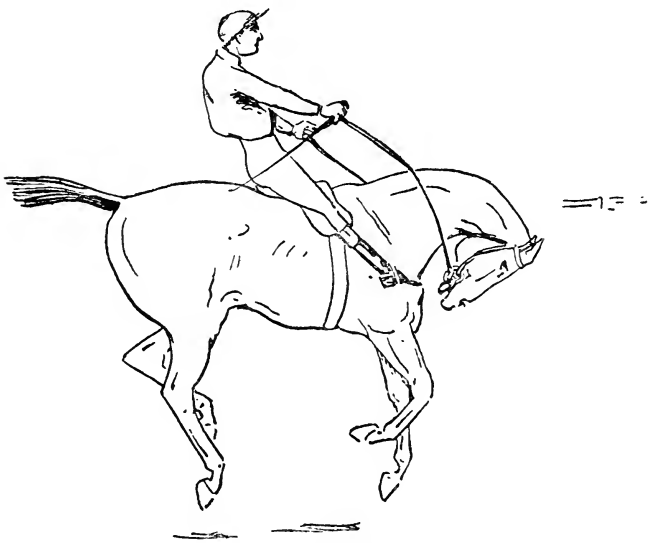
SKETCH NO. 7

But if he does this, then there are only two courses open to you. You must throw your body forward so as to maintain your balance, which will necessitate separating your hands so as to keep up the pressure on the reins, which you dare not relax;

up his reins and assumed a correct position once more.

If he doesn't adopt this method, there is only one other result, which is shown in the next drawing. He is "left behind." His body is thrown

back, his legs fly forward, and, being completely off his balance, his hands swing upwards. All my readers will agree, I am sure, that I have not overdrawn this picture. In fact, as photographs show,



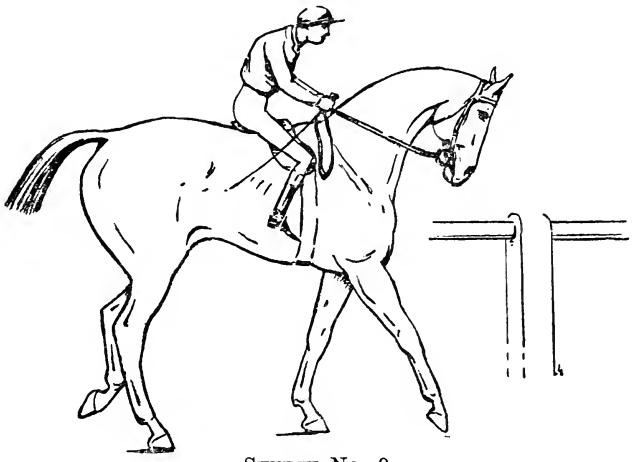
SKETCH NO. 8

Or, you must be "left behind." In which case your body is thrown back, and in order to regain your balance your hands go up and your feet go out.

the positions that some of us get into are often very much worse than this. Occasionally it occurs actually that the reins are flung over the horse's head. It has occurred to most of us some time or another when landing over a fence, and we recover ourselves to find all four reins on the same side of

the horse's neck. The reason for this has been that we have ridden with our reins too long.

If we turn to sketch No. 9 we shall see the length of rein that a jockey should have when going up to the post if he has reason to prepare for the "unexpected." He doesn't look so comfortable, or



SKETCH No. 9

But if you are wise, and suspect a sudden movement of your horse, you will ride with your reins this length. It is not quite so comfortable or so graceful, but—

so "insouciant," as the rider in sketch No. 6, but he is ready for any eventuality which No. 6 is not; and if we now turn to sketch No. 10, and compare that with Nos. 7 and 8, we can easily see which has the best control. There is no time to shorten the reins after the bound the horse has taken, so the wise man does so before.

To me, of all the difficulties of riding, this question

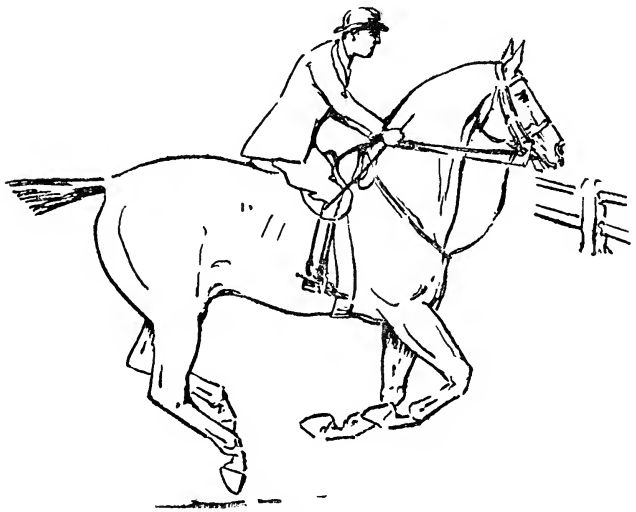
of reins is the most difficult in practice. They always have a tendency to lengthen, especially with a keen horse, and very often it is not possible

SKETCH No. 10

When your horse makes his playful buck, you will find you will have no difficulty in remaining properly placed in the saddle.

to shorten them in time. Sometimes we are too careless. We know that we are not properly placed, and we allow the horse to make his jump. But then we also know what the result will be, and it is on those occasions that we are not willing

to be photographed. But mistakes such as these are not due to ignorance or inability, but either to a natural indolence, or to it being sometimes inadvisable to stop the horse, turn round and face the obstacle again, after we have got into the correct position by shortening our reins.



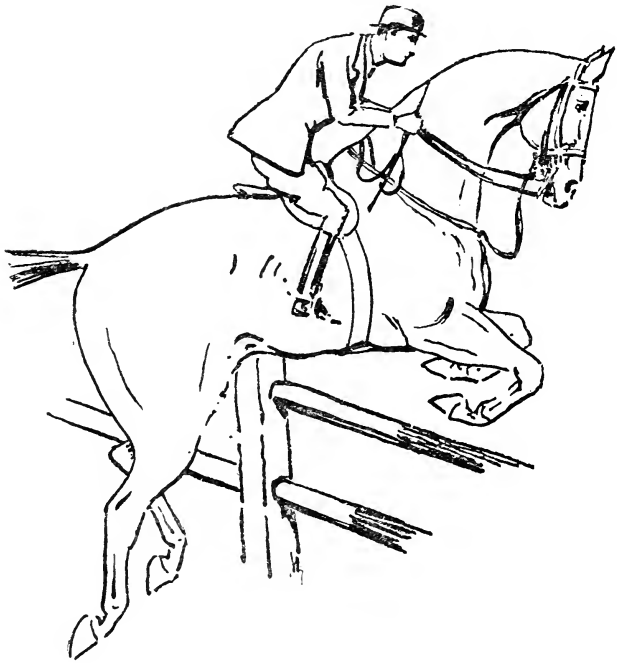
SKETCH No. 11

This drawing is of a man approaching a fence. The length of his reins should be noted.

Remember it is always easy to lengthen when necessity demands it. But to shorten them, at the moment we want to, is often an impossibility.

The next three sketches show clearly what the length of rein should be when approaching, jumping and landing over a fence, and it should be

particularly noted that they are all the same. Once the principle is grasped, there is nothing more to do than to put it into practice.



SKETCH No. 12

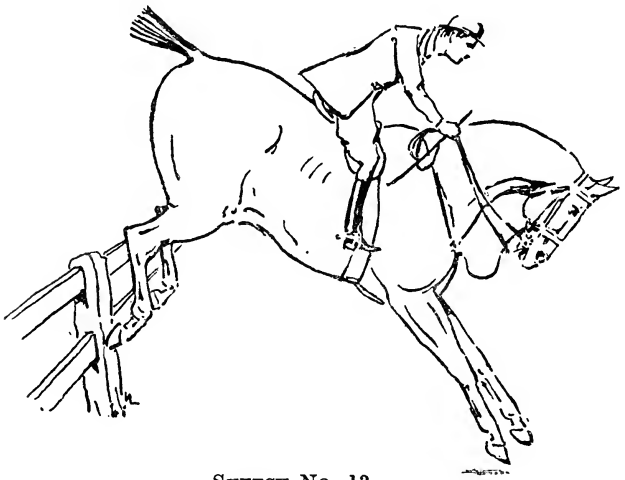
This is the correct attitude when jumping the fence.

Note the length of his reins, which are the same as when approaching the fence, and also note that the horse has his head perfectly free.

Also that the rider's knees are "pointed," and that the stirrup leathers are perpendicular.

The reins should be the same length when landing as when approaching a fence. The reason for this

is that directly the horse's hind legs reach the ground he raises his forehand, and as he does so, unless the reins are the same length as when approaching the fence, the horse is completely out



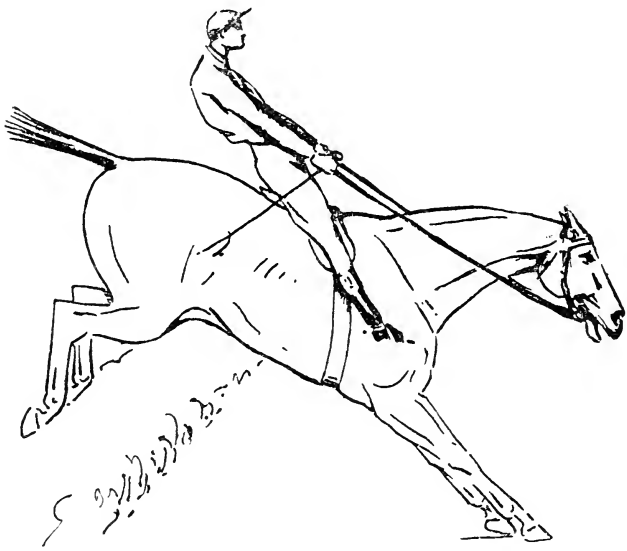
SKETCH NO. 13

The position on landing. Note that the reins are the same length as before, so that the rider is in a position to resume his normal seat directly the horse's hind legs touch the ground. The knee is still "pointed," and the stirrup leather is still perpendicular, because the horse has not yet landed, and consequently the force of impact has not come into play. The horse also has complete freedom of the head.

of control until the rider is able to "wind up" his reins, and assume a normal position once more.

The next sketch (No. 14) shows the attitude most steeplechase riders assume when landing over a fence, and the following one (No. 15) the position advocated in most books as the approved method

in the hunting field. With reference to the length of rein only, both have the same fault. There will be, at least, two strides before the rider has adjusted



SKETCH No. 14.

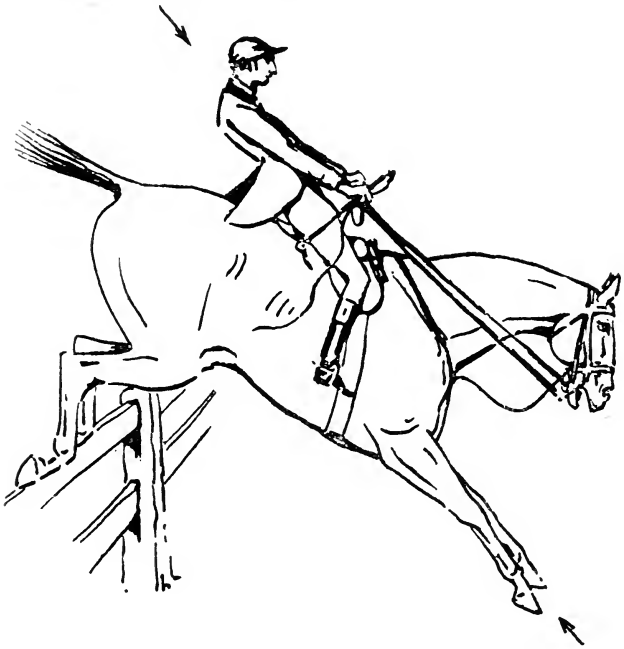
This is the position too often adopted by our jockeys (and hunting men as well) when landing.

The rider is nothing but a passenger, and when the horse lands, he has no control over him at this moment until he has recollected himself and his reins.

Also, as his legs are straight out, the jar of impact has nothing to absorb it, and he will be thrown out of the saddle to a certain extent, when the horse's fore feet touch the ground.

his balance and collected his reins, and in those two strides much may happen. In riding a point-to-point race, for example, on the far side of the fence there might be some cart ruts, or boggy ground,

or some small grip or other, and the rider could not only give his mount no assistance, but from



SKETCH No. 15

This is the old approved hunting style. It is much better than the position in sketch No. 14, because the knee is pointed, and the jar of impact is absorbed by the muscles of the knee. But through having thrown his body back his reins are much too long, and he will not be able to resume riding until he has got his body forward again, and gathered up his reins.

Also note that although the body is back it in no way relieves the jar of impact on the forelegs. The line of the force of impact is shown by the arrows, and it can be seen that the body is now so placed as to concentrate the whole weight on to them.

his position he would actually be a hindrance to him as his horse was attempting to get out of

the unexpected difficulty. But look back for a moment to the other drawing (No. 13) of the rider landing correctly, and it will be seen that he is in a position to help his horse immediately, no matter what happens.

Directly we lengthen our reins we lose control, and we must lengthen our reins if we lean the body back on landing over a fence. Our object should be to keep our reins at that length which alone gives control, and to keep them at that length until different conditions prevail.

So that when training the young horseman it is not enough to say "Prepare to trot" to warn him to shorten his reins, but to this should be added "Prepare to jump," when he should be instructed to shorten his reins still further, until his hands are alongside his horse's neck in a similar position to that shown in picture No. 11. This is the only way to insure the correct position of the body being maintained, but as this chapter is on reins, I will defer discussing the position of the body until the next chapter.

When riding keen and excitable horses, who often snatch at the bridle, or "yaw," or, generally, do those things which make the reins slip through one's fingers, I have found it most helpful to have a special bridle made with very short reins. I make them short enough so as to be able, when cantering, and when the horse is "bridling," to be able to hold them in the palm of the hand without any "slack," and yet be able to have a comfortable "feel" on the horse's mouth. When jumping,

this is especially a convenience, because should the horse snatch at the bridle on approaching the fence, one can, if necessary, let the reins go entirely, as they can be immediately picked up again without the slightest trouble. This practice has much in its favour. It prevents the reins being too long at any moment; so that the body can be got forward whenever desired, causing less likelihood of being "left behind." It helps the muscles of the fingers when riding horses that "take hold" a bit, because there is no slack to consider, and it is impossible for the reins to slip. One can ride equally well holding the reins in the usual way, or they can be placed in the palm of the hand without using the fingers at all; and when a horse is cantering collectedly and bridling well, the horse can be controlled, if so desired, by even balancing the reins on the end of one finger. It is an extremely useful little "tip" for all riding-school work, and I can strongly recommend it to those who have not tried it. Not only for work in the riding school, but it is very useful indeed at polo. Having no slack to bother about (which sometimes gets mixed up with the stick), it is a great rest to one's fingers. To reach a ball some distance away, one can if need be drop the reins altogether, and if one's fingers are tired, one can even control the pony very effectively by using the forearm instead of the hand.

Unless specially ordered, saddlers make the reins of ordinary bridles too long. The length to which they are all cut was worked out as correct

when the body was thrown back at every fence. But for those of us who have decided not to lean back when landing over a fence they are unnecessarily long, and I think it will be found generally more comfortable for ordinary work, hunting, etc., if they are shortened by about a foot. If we ride according to modern principles, it will be found we never require the full length, or, indeed, anything like it, and the less slack there is, to get under our knees, or work in under the saddle, the better.

The chief difficulty in keeping our reins the proper length is that unless horses "bridle" well, they require great length of rein when walking, and also when trotting, if they (as many do) trot with their noses stuck out. So that this gives us another reason why we should teach our hunters to bridle whenever possible. There are, of course, many horses with bad mouths and bad necks who can never be got to bridle properly. But that is a matter which can't be helped as long as one has to ride horses of that description. If a horse is bridling properly at the walk the requisite shortening of the reins is a simple matter, and if he should happen to shy suddenly, or give any other unexpected display, the reins, if not quite short enough, are sufficiently so for the dealing with the matter in most cases.

Another reason why riders often have their reins too long is because it is often inconvenient and uncomfortable to have them the proper length. This is particularly noticeable when riders are

forming up for the start of a polo match. Just as one's stirrups feel too short when the horse is comparatively stationary, so do the reins, when held at the proper length for galloping and jumping, also feel much too short. But as it is necessary to be in the "anticipatory" length for one's legs, so is it also necessary to be similarly placed in reference to one's hands.

A rider likes to look "at home" in the saddle, especially when his friends are near, sitting upright, and in a position to be "snapshotted."

If his reins are the proper length, his body is leaning forward and his hands are on each side of the withers. It looks awkward and feels awkward, and gives the appearance of "nervousness." But that can't be helped. We must be in a preparatory position, just as a boxer is before the opening blow is struck. With the rider this means short stirrups, short reins; with the boxer it is hands and body forward, and knees bent. They are both the same only differently expressed, both are prepared for coming events, and both are right. The principle is simple and obvious, but it has to be explained to be understood.

As with the stirrups, the question must be answered as to how the rider is to know whether he is riding with his reins the right length or not, and the reply is similar. The reins should be as long as possible, after one is assured that they are short enough to enable the body to be thrown as far forward as probable circumstances demand. If we are only trotting they can be fairly long,

but if we are going to race over fences they must be quite short, and if we are going to jump a six-foot rail in the show-ring, they must be shorter still. It must be remembered that all this shortening must be done before we begin. There is seldom time or opportunity for any shortening, once the horse is in motion.

I have sometimes ridden with plaited reins, which are supposed to have the advantage of conferring a better grip for holding pulling horses. This is surely unsound, because although they may help a grip when one's fingers are approaching exhaustion, they certainly make it more difficult to shorten the reins, which is a matter of much greater importance, and even with ordinary reins one of very considerable difficulty. When riding excitable horses with light mouths, it is astonishingly difficult to shorten without informing them of what is being done. It requires a great deal of experience, guile and dexterity, and if on the top of that is added the extra burden of handling plaits, the difficulties become insurmountable.

THE POSITION OF THE BODY

As the length of the stirrup and the length of the reins have a direct bearing on the position of the body, it is somewhat difficult to discuss this without a certain amount of repetition. I have already shown how it is necessary for the body to be forward on landing in order to avoid the necessity of letting one's reins out. But I now want to discuss this from another standpoint.

It is, firstly, necessary from the horse's point of view. The part of his body that he requires to have free when jumping is his loins. Weight on that portion of his body interferes with his take off, and it interferes with his landing.

In the canter or gallop, the rider's body should be so placed that as the horse's hind legs throw off for each stride, the thrust acts as a "tap" upon the body and so keeps it constantly going with the horse. I will illustrate my meaning.

Take a man practising boxing with a punchball. It entirely depends upon when he hits that ball as to how far it will go and what strength will be

required. If he waits until it has reached its limit and then hits it, a comparatively gentle tap will drive it at great speed in the opposite direction, but if his next blow isn't well timed, then a much stronger blow will not send it so far as his first effort. Or take a boy trundling a hoop. Once he has got it running nicely, very gentle, well-placed taps will keep the hoop rolling smoothly and evenly, and the faster he goes the lighter will be the taps required. So it is in riding. When galloping, let us imagine the back of the saddle to be the fist of the boxer punching the ball, and one's own body to be the punchball. (Remember our body has become absorbed in the motion of the horse, and is itself in motion.) Now, as long as the action of the horse's hind quarters gives us little gentle pats (like the boxer who has well timed his blows on the ball) then we are rightly placed in the saddle, but directly we feel any bump, or jar, then we know that there must be something wrong.

Remember the position I am assuming the rider to be in. Not the "old gentleman's" cantering seat, where the body is leaning back, and the entire weight of the rider is on the seat of the saddle, but when the weight is taken up on the stirrup irons, and the body is poised as if about to make a standing jump. It is then we shall find this gentle lift imparted by the horse every stride he takes, and once the principle is realized, it is a simple matter to know whether the horse is patting our bodies along, or whether he has to bang them

along, or whether he is carrying the whole body entirely.

As I have just pointed out, the faster the pace the less "tap" is necessary (like the punchball), and it has been worked out by some mathematicians that the faster the pace of the horse, the lighter the rider becomes in the saddle. They go so far as to say that if a horse could be found to gallop 800 miles an hour, that the rider's weight would have dissolved itself into infinity. As I am not a mathematician I will not dispute the point, and as I have never ridden a horse at 800 miles an hour, I have never experienced a sensation which must be not without its novelty, and so I must leave it at that. The point, however, is of importance, and that is, that the body must always be travelling with the horse, patted like a punchball, and this position can only be attained by having short reins and properly adjusted stirrups.

As this applies when galloping along the flat, it applies still more when jumping. As the horse takes off, it is of the greatest importance to him whether he has to carry the whole weight of the rider's body on his loins, or whether he merely has to "pat" it over. It is this point that makes all the difference to a horse's jumping. It decides whether he will clear a rail or knock it down, whether he will get over brilliantly or bungle it. Make no mistake, faults are nearly always those of the rider and not of the horse. Provided the ground on taking off is firm, a horse can judge with

wonderful accuracy the amount of effort that is necessary to carry him over an obstacle. Just the same way as we ourselves can gauge how much effort is necessary for us to jump over a chair. But the horse cannot judge the inefficiency of his rider. If there is one rule I would like to give all embryo horsemen, it would be, "Blame yourself, don't blame the horse." Unless the rider times the thrust very perfectly, then the tap becomes a hit, and the accuracy of the jump is an impossibility.

When horses rap a rail is not because they are careless, or because they like rapping them, but very often because the rider is not in time with his mount. It is a difficult art, and not even our best riders can be certain of perfect accuracy every time; but once we understand what is wanted, then we can assuredly improve much more quickly than if we are groping in the dark, uncertain of what is really required.

Not long ago I was able to give a very practical and pleasing demonstration of these principles, an opportunity that occurs but seldom. I was out hacking on a well-known jumping mare, and on coming to a rail in a field, put her over it. To my surprise she rapped it hard, and so I put her at it three or four times. Each time she jumped it badly. A friend of mine who was looking on suggested that he should stand by the fence and hit her as she was about to jump, but this I refused to let him do. Now the ground was slightly rising, and it had just occurred to me what might

have been the possible trouble. I shortened my stirrups one hole and then put her at the rail, and she immediately cleared it with six inches to spare.

It was a great education to my friend, who had not heard of such methods before, and, I am glad to say, it made a deep impression upon him.

Let us consider for a moment what the reasons were. I was jumping slightly uphill, so that it was more difficult to throw one's body forward, and consequently each time she rapped the rail she had to carry the weight of my body (but only to a certain extent, because I was not wholly back), and so was unable to quite clear the obstacle. But directly I shortened my stirrups I was able to lean more forward, and then when the mare jumped her loins were free, and she was able to clear the obstacle in her own very beautiful style, with plenty to spare. Now, I submit, that many men, who have lived with horses all their lives, would, under such circumstances, have blamed the horse, and probably got out the whip and started punishment. Here was, indeed, a great occasion for ocular and practical demonstration. I was able to show clearly and conclusively an instance where we should first "pull the beam out of our own eye." So once more I repeat, blame yourself first, before you blame the horse.

So far in this chapter I have only emphasized the importance of the body being forward while trotting, galloping and on the approach to the

fence. I want now to touch upon landing after having jumped.

My first object is to remove an erroneous idea that is very prevalent among most riding men. It is supposed that by leaning back, weight is taken off the horse's fore legs. This is incorrect, as a glance back at No. 15 will show.

From this sketch it can be seen quite clearly that far from taking any weight off the horse's forehand, the whole body is on the direct line, so that we can dismiss that theory at once as obviously false.

It not only does not take any weight off the forehand, but it places pressure upon the one place that should be free, which is the loins, and if the action of the horse is watched very closely the effect will be noticed. If the hind quarters are left free from all extraneous pressure, the hind feet perform a true parabola, and land on the ground an appreciable time after the front legs; they swing perfectly true, and touch the ground in the proper position for the horse to strike off for his next stride. But if the body is thrown back directly the culminating point has been reached, then the parabola of the hind legs become obloid. The horse brings his hind quarters down too soon, and in consequence he is not then in a position to strike off for his next stride, and has to adjust his balance accordingly.

The following diagrams may bring this out more clearly.

The dotted lines show the natural curves of a horse's fore and hind feet.

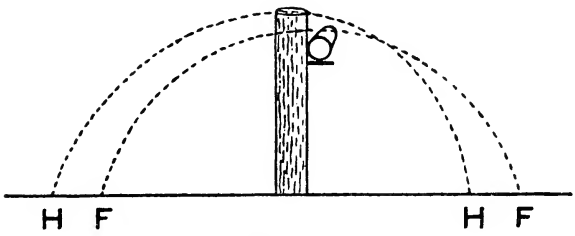


DIAGRAM V

The hind feet (on account of the "throw" which comes from them) often describe a slightly higher parabola than the fore feet, and should, therefore, clear the obstacle with a little more to spare, and they should land the same distance away from the fore feet as they originally started from. So that in the diagram the lines H F should be equilateral.

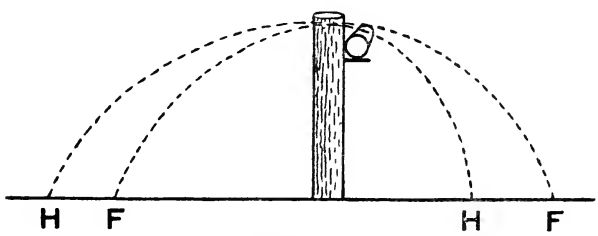


DIAGRAM VI

Diagram VI shows the effect of weight being brought to bear upon the loins, and it will be

observed that the flight of the hind legs is not higher than that of the fore legs, and that they are suddenly forced downwards; and here it will be seen also that the line H F on landing is greater than the line H F on taking off, which demonstrates the point that in this instance the horse has landed less well balanced than when taking off.

If the body is kept back the whole time, then the horse is forced to drag his hind legs, and they perform then a parabola less high than that of the fore. (For the sake of clearness I have shown only one fore and hind leg and have exaggerated the parabolas, so as to keep the dotted lines as separate as possible.) So that we can see, if the truth of these diagrams are admitted, that leaning back on landing has the following disadvantages :—

(1) It puts pressure upon the horse's loins at the very moment he should be free.

(2) It interferes with the lifting power of the hind quarters.

(3) It prevents a horse landing properly balanced.

(4) It necessitates the rider lengthening his reins.

(5) It makes him unable to collect the horse until he has regathered them, and should any unexpected obstacle appear he is not in a position to negotiate it.

(6) It in no way lessens the strain upon the fore feet on landing.

(7) Finally, if the horse should peck as he lands, on account of the body being already back and the reins lengthened, the rider has used his " last

cartridge," has no further resources, and can only hope for the best.

Consequently I will go so far as to say that there are no circumstances under which it is right to throw the body back, although I willingly admit that we often have to, because we have sometimes to rectify mistakes which we have made in the best way we can. Approaching a fence with the reins too long is the most usual error, which once made cannot be rectified until after the leap has been completed.

People may say that if a horse pecks very badly it is absolutely necessary to lean back to prevent falling off. This is an assertion I cannot accept. It is not necessary, not even when steeplechasing. If the whole shock of landing has been absorbed by the knee joint, as I have previously explained, any further inclination to fall over the horse's head can be overcome by resting both hands on his neck, and then, as the horse recovers from his stumble, the body can be raised and the rider is in a position to collect his mount at the very moment he requires collecting.

An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory, so I will tell my readers that I have seen a man who was sitting his horse with his body well forward, ride at a high post and rails. The horse pecked so badly on landing that his ears were actually in the mud. But the rider never moved in the saddle, collected him as easily as if nothing had occurred, and was on and away without any difficulty. Such a feat could never have been

accomplished unless the rider had been perfectly balanced, with both reins and stirrups of the proper length.

The next sketch is a position which we have all

SKETCH No. 16

This is a position which all of us have been in some time or another. It is due to the body not having been sufficiently far forward as the horse took off. So that the rider has been "left behind." In order to save the situation he has hung on to the reins, and the horse has had a bad jab in the mouth. The result is that he has thrown up his head, which has caused his hind legs to actually land before his fore legs, with the sad consequences I have here tried to depict.

seen frequently. It is of a horse landing over a fence with his hind legs reaching the ground before his front legs. This phenomenon occurs because the rider is sitting back, and has also jabbed his

horse in the mouth. By leaning back he has depressed the hind quarters, by jabbing he has raised the forehand, so that we arrive at an exactly converse result than that which should be obtained in true horsemanship. The rule for which is that directly a horse takes off, his head should always be free, and that the body should be forward. Head free, loins free, are the key words.

As I have said, I do not exclude steeplechasing. Take up any picture paper during the racing season, and see what extraordinary positions the jockeys get themselves into.

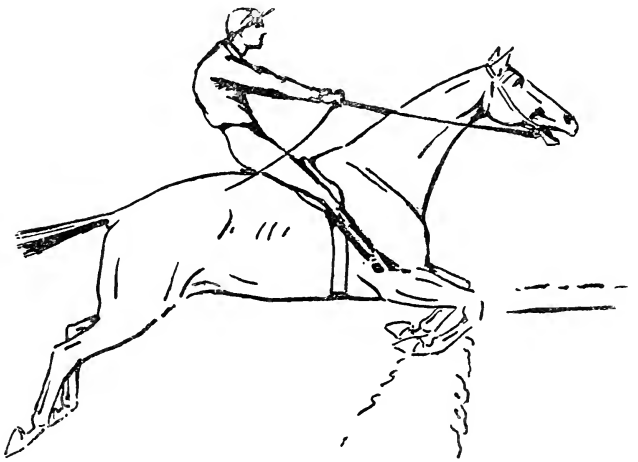
Sketch No. 14 shows the most usual position. It is not exaggerated, as I am sure my readers will admit. And that any man who aspires to be an expert rider should get into such positions shows that we are still a long way from the "path of grace."

Not only do they get themselves into this position when landing, but also before the horse has commenced to turn. They lean back when approaching the fence, and having got themselves into this initially wrong position, it is impossible to rectify it after the horse has taken off, because they are "behind their work" from the beginning. It is like a man leaning back in the tube just as the train is about to start. He would in such a case have to hang on pretty hard to the straps to prevent falling, but no whit harder than he does on to the reins to avert a similar disaster when riding.

Sketch No. 17 shows the position. Here the jockey is "strap-hanging" with a vengeance, and

yet how common it is to see this position between the flags. These are faults that must be eradicated before we can consider ourselves a nation of horsemen.

There is one occasion when it is impossible to



SKETCH No. 17

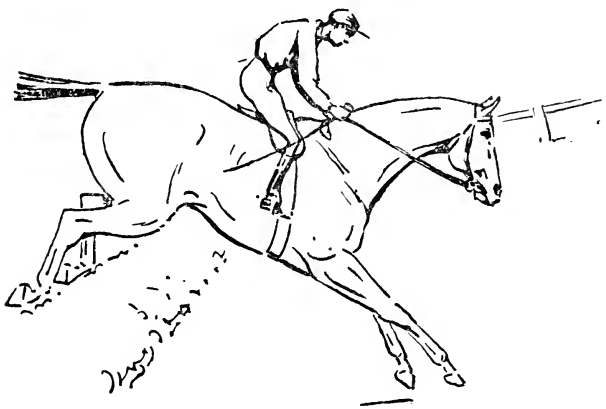
This position is only too common in steeplechasing. Here the body has been thrown back actually before the horse took off. The rider is now being pulled over the fence by his reins.

This is strap-hanging, not riding, and has nothing to recommend it in any particular.

prevent having one's body back. It is when on approaching a fence, the horse takes off a stride too soon, or, at any rate, a stride sooner than the rider expects. This occurs fairly frequently in steeplechasing when the horse is fresh, and more rarely in the slower pacers of the hunting field,

but with careful training it can be prevented to a very great extent.

When it does happen it is impossible to prevent being "left behind." The reason is, that we should only throw our bodies forward just on the moment of the expected thrust, or in



SKETCH No. 18

The correct position for landing over a fence in steeplechasing. Note that there is no weight on the horse's loins, and his head is absolutely free, also that the reins are the right length to continue controlling the horse, directly he has landed.

The jar of impact is absorbed in the muscles of the knee joint.

other words, as the horse's hind legs meet the ground just before he "takes off." Consequently if he "takes off" unexpectedly, the thrust has occurred before our bodies are in a position to meet it, and there is nothing for it but the body to be left behind, or, what is apparently "leaning back." It is not leaning back at all in reality,

because leaning suggests a movement of volition. In this case it is not only involuntary, it is forced upon one, and therefore the expression "left behind" is more suitable than that of "leaning

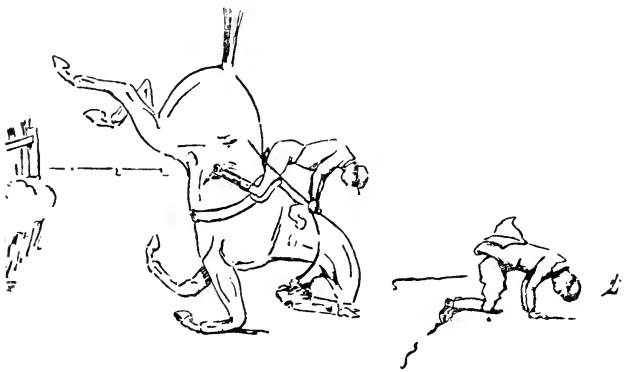
SKETCH No. 19

Should the horse peck on landing, it is essential that the rider should let the horse have complete freedom of the head and loins. Owing to the "pointed knee" the shock of impact has been absorbed by the knee joint, and any tendency that there may be for the body still to go forward can be restrained by the hands on the horse's neck.

back." But when this occurs, there is no reason why the knees should not remain "pointed," and there is no occasion in riding when the lower part of the leg should not be kept back. If I were judging horsemanship I should not take marks off

for a rider being "left behind" under such a circumstance, but did he not keep his knees pointed all the time I should most certainly deduct marks for style.

There is another occasion which has the appear-



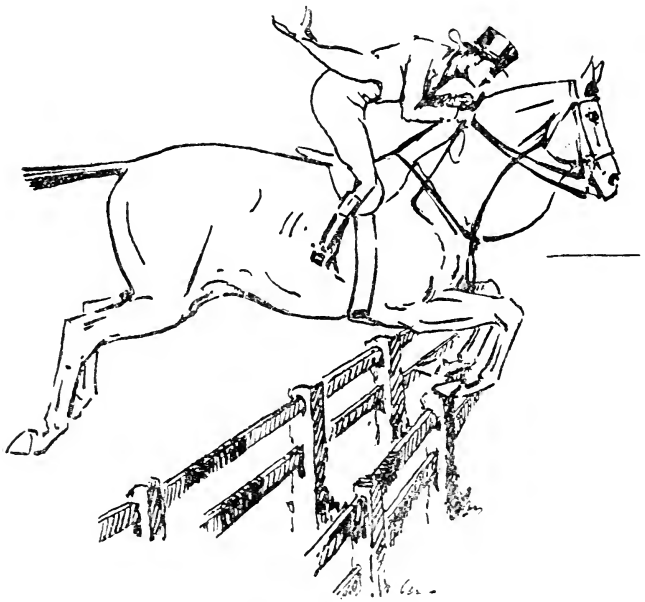
SKETCH No. 20

This sketch is intended to represent the extreme position at which a jockey can remain in the saddle. The position is similar, though more acute, to the rider in the preceding sketch. It is interesting to note that his attitude is nearly identical with that of the man I have depicted who is supposed to have made a big jump off his feet across a drain, and who has slipped upon landing. Had this man's body not been well forward throughout the course of his leap, he would have fallen backwards into the water.

I can only ask my readers to imagine where the jockey would be, were he leaning back in a situation such as this. He would not have been able to keep his knee "pointed," and the shock of impact would, consequently, have driven him clean out of the saddle.

ance of bad horsemanship, which is not really so. When putting a "nappy" horse at a fence, it occasionally happens that he gives the rider all the "feel" and assurance that he is going to jump,

but as he is "asked" to take off—which means that the rider gives him his head and throws his

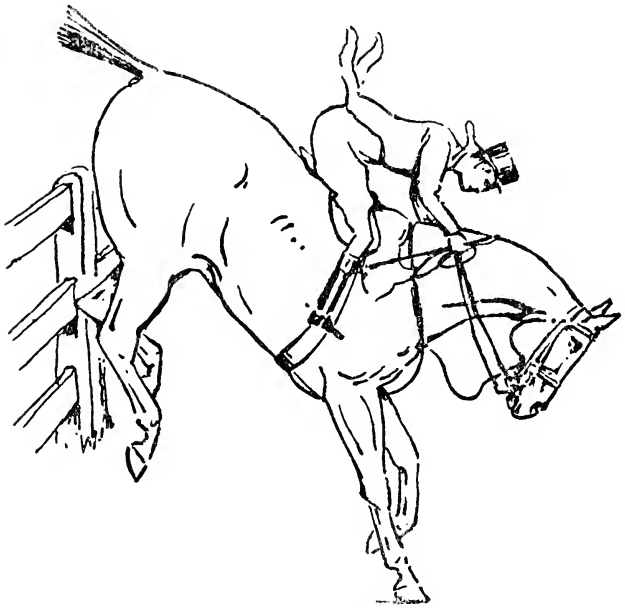


SKETCH No. 21

In this sketch my endeavour is to show the correct position for negotiating a big fence at which considerable pace is required. Here the horse has taken off well away from the rails, and the rider in order to insure freedom to the horse of both head and loin, has thrown his body forward as far as possible. Should there be a "peck" on landing, it is a simple matter for him to adopt the attitude of the rider in sketch No. 19. There will be but little tendency to fall over his horse's head, provided he keeps his knees "pointed."

body forward—he may stop instantly. On an occasion such as this, it is extremely difficult to remain in the saddle. The only thing to do is to

bury one's knuckles into the horse's back, and press the body back as strongly as possible. No matter



SKETCH NO. 22

This sketch represents a horse "pitching" as he lands. It would be similar to when landing over a "drop" fence, or any other occasion when the angle of descent is extreme. It should be noted that the rider has not lengthened his reins. If he were crossing a sunken road he would be able to collect his horse in a moment, and his reins would be of the right length to be able to "put" his horse at the "up" fence, without difficulty.

how good the rider's seat may be, a circumstance such as this is very disconcerting, and it is still more so when riding a bold horse which is not suspected of refusing. I remember this happening

to me once when I was asked to give an exhibition jump. I was riding my mare Ozone, who is usually much too free and bold at her fences. Just as I thought she was going to jump, her eye caught some object which raised her suspicions, and she stopped dead. As the fence was a fairly high one, I had ridden her fairly fast at it, and, of course, threw my body well forward in anticipation of her "kick off." The result was I found myself on the flat of my back, to the great amusement of the onlookers, who, unfortunately, happened to be many.

But occasions such as these are happily of rare occurrence, if one is riding well-schooled horses. It is a sign of bad training for horses to refuse, and it should be very much less common than it is. Generally speaking, a horse gives plenty of warning of his disinclination to jump, and then the catastrophe can be easily avoided. I am only now referring to the considerable difficulty there is in sticking on when it comes quite unexpectedly. This is the only occasion when the "body back" seat would come in usefully. But as it would only assist when encountering the improbable and the occurrence is very rare, we needn't worry our heads much about it.

It is usually supposed that it takes many years to make a man into a horseman. But I do not think this is really the case. If a young man is trained on the right lines, and has the necessary qualifications in both mind and body, I believe that he can be made into a quite good horseman

in a wonderfully short space of time. But first and foremost his conformation must be right; that is to say, he must be able to balance himself well. A man who skates well, for example, could soon be made a horseman. Some men who have long backs in proportion to the rest of their bodies, for example, start riding under a considerable disadvantage. In order to counteract the length of their body above the saddle, they will find it necessary to ride rather long. By riding long, they cannot maintain a true balance in the saddle, and so they are between " the devil and the deep sea." But given a naturally well-balanced body, I do not think the mysteries of horsemanship are nearly so obscure as many people believe.

It seems to me that the difficulties have always lain in the past by teaching the young idea to have his body back, and I submit to my readers the contention that if they will reverse that instruction and teach body forward, they will find most of their perplexities will fade away, and that their pupils will tumble to the idea as easily as ducks to water.

I will now ask my readers to look back to the copy of the photograph on page 4, and to make their own criticisms.

THE GRIP

ONE of the first things that used to happen to a recruit when he commenced riding school was that he was placed on a numnah and trotted round and round the school. The object of this was to teach him to grip. It was to develop his tailor muscles, and to give him what is called a strong seat. I have no doubt these lessons had their effect, because in talking to soldiers I find that they usually believe that strength is the first essential of horsemanship. For this reason I believe such exercises to be fundamentally unsound.

The art of riding is quite difficult enough, and we require all the assistance we can have, especially in the early stages. The young rider wants confidence, and every effort should be made to make him fond of being on the back of a horse. Starting recruits on a numnah has precisely an opposite effect. If he falls off (most rough riders take good care that he does) it does not induce confidence, and the discomfort of trotting round a school without stirrups most certainly does not add to his pleasure. The idea is, of course, that it develops his leg muscles. But, like all other forms of callisthenics, unless the exercise is carried

out daily it is of little, if any, value, except for growing lads; and after nearly a quarter of a century's experience in a cavalry regiment, a spectacle I have yet to see is that of the rough riders, headed by the riding master, trotting round the school every morning on numnahs to keep their muscles in order! But surely this should be done if it is of the benefit assumed by its originators.

I object to the practice for another reason. It gives the rider a wrong seat. The balance of the body is quite different to that when riding with stirrups, the consequence being that when the stirrups are taken up the inclination is to ride too long. Furthermore, it teaches a man a wrong lesson. He is made to believe that riding is an effort of grip, and not a question of balance.

The advocates of the practice assume that it teaches a man to sit down in the saddle. Personally, I believe it has an opposite effect. When a man is not "sitting down" it is because he is gripping. No one can help "sitting down" in the saddle if the legs are splayed out from the horse's sides, and this simple fact demonstrates sufficiently clearly that not "sitting down" is due to an unnecessary grip. In fact, nearly all awkwardness in the saddle is caused by the rider using muscles unnecessarily, either in the arms, hands or legs. So that what we want to teach is freedom. These callisthenics or muscle exercises are sufficiently performed in ordinary riding, and there is no fear that they will be used ineffectively provided the balance of the body is correct. That is the main

thing. Riding is far more a question of equilibrium than of strength.

All students should be taught that "grip" is only to be used when differences of opinion exist between the horse and his rider. Thus, when a horse is trying to refuse a fence it is impossible to hold him too tight. A grip is necessary in all cases of swerving, but in instances of "pecking" when landing over a fence, although the ordinary hold would naturally be somewhat increased, a tight grip is not necessary provided the whole shock has been absorbed in the muscles of the knee.

Position and balance are what we require, not the muscles of a Hercules or the development of Sandow. I notice very often the condition of riders after a race. Frequently they are fearfully "blown" and much exhausted. We expect such a condition if the horse has not gone kindly, but if he has jumped freely and well, it merely shows that the rider has been using an unnecessary amount of muscle throughout the race.

I am not speaking of the effort necessary to ride a hard finish, or to steady a pulling horse. I am speaking of the effort that is necessary to ride a horse round a steeplechase course under normal conditions, and if the jockey is properly placed in the saddle, he should be neither blown nor exhausted after the event. The difference between jockeys is much marked, and it is a point that should be noted by owners and trainers, because it tells the tale of how they have ridden their horses throughout the race.

There is one more point upon which there seems to be a good deal of dubiety, and that is, what portion of our bodies produces the grip, and how is the grip effected. It is customary to hear "the grip of the thighs" mentioned. A man with flat thighs is supposed to be better fitted for riding than a man with round thighs. I must say I find this difficult to understand. Firstly, we don't grip with our thighs. We grip with our knees. The thighs are off the saddle as often as not, except when standing still or walking. The thighs are only the channel through which, or by means of which, the knees are able to grip. What is meant by round thighs I have no idea. If you take the shape of the leg in reference to the saddle, it will be seen that the flat part of the thigh is nowhere near the saddle at all. That portion is actually uppermost, and the portion that meets the saddle is the part almost directly in rear—nearly the same portion, in fact, that one sits upon when in a chair.

I have discussed this matter with the riding-school staff on many occasions, who have a great deal of experience in this matter, owing to the number of recruits that pass through their hands in the course of a year, and the idea prevalent with them is that there are many men with short, round legs who seem to have some difficulty in getting their knees in close to the saddle, and these are the men that they call "round-thighed." Well, as a matter of fact, it has nothing whatever to do with round thighs (otherwise women would have

much more difficulty than they do). It is merely a matter of leg conformation, and is of little importance, because directly the rider takes his weight off the saddle and places it upon the stirrup irons, the whole difficulty fades away. The only differences in conformation that matter are bandy legs and knock knees. A bandy-legged man clings to the horse's sides with greater facility, and generally speaking, is able to keep his toes in without effort. The knock-kneed man has difficulty in getting his toes in; he is nearly always the one who has his toes out. But when sitting in the saddle at a stand or when walking casually, it is the inclination of every one to have his knees away from it, and it doesn't matter in the least, because in that position he is riding at ease, and the easier he is (without lolling) when so doing, the better for him and the horse.

When jumping a fence he should use as little muscular effort as possible. Balance should be our first thought. A tight grip on the horse just as he is about to spring has the inclination to restrain the freedom of his shoulder muscles. There is only one man that I have ever seen who carried this point to extremes. In the years 1913–14 he rode at Olympia, and caused much amusement to the onlookers. Every time the horse jumped, instead of increasing his hold on the saddle, he relaxed it; in fact, he opened out his legs instead of closing them. The result was he was thrown up into the air quite two feet and sometimes more away from

the saddle, and came down with a hard thump as the horse landed. Of course, if the horse swerved at all he would be completely unhorsed, but generally speaking the horse jumped perfectly true, and he was able to continue his round. As a matter of fact he did some capital performances, and if it was not an exhibition of riding in its best sense, it showed that he, at least, had grasped the great principle of freedom for the horse from the moment he takes off to the moment he lands. The result was that his horse jumped very cleverly and well, and seldom touched a fence.

This brings me back to the statement that if only riders can arrange never to interfere in any way with a horse as he jumps, the horse will jump clean and true every time. We can interfere with him in only three ways: by the reins, by the body, and by the legs. Give the horse complete freedom in all three particulars, and then if his early education has been good we will find him slipping over fences in a way that will surprise us.

It may be said that if balance is the whole basis of horsemanship, there must be great variation in style, owing to the varying conformation of individuals.

This is most certainly true, and every rider must adjust his seat to his conformity. If he is well proportioned, his seat should be a good one. If he is not so blessed by nature, he may not look so well in the saddle.

I have already mentioned the fact that we only grip when we are in disagreement with our mount,

as, for example, when he is refusing, or when he is shying or bucking. But there is another occasion when grip is necessary. It is when he is going faster than we mean him to, "pulling," in fact. Then is the occasion when "grip" is necessary. Inexperienced horsemen merely hold on to the reins and pull against him. In doing so the inclination is to stick the feet out so as to get a stronger leverage. Such a method of treating pulling horses is, of course, entirely wrong. The way to tackle this very common problem is to grip. Get one's knees well pointed (*i. e.* the lower part of the leg back), and hold him as tight as possible. The faster he goes, the tighter must be the grip. When a horse is held like this he will never get out of hand. Keep a firm pressure on the reins, and then when it is wanted to stop him, it can be done. Here the control is maintained by grip, and the more powerful the rider, the less able even the most confirmed bolter will be to get away. The expression "out of hand" really means "out of leg." That is the whole secret of riding "keen" horses, but the knees must be pointed and the hands kept low.

Before leaving the subject of grip, I want to say a word in favour of the short-legged men. It is so generally supposed that long legs are best for riding, that any other view may come as a surprise. But, personally, I consider that the strong, short-legged man has better command than a man who has what is called a good riding leg. Firstly, the strong little man has better control

over his limbs, and when it comes to a question of grip, I believe he can hold a horse tighter. It is, in reality, a question of leverage. We do not crack nuts low down on the shanks of the cracker, but as high up as possible.

Let us look at diagram VII. When a given force is exercised on the angle B C B, there will be greater pressure exercised on the line A A than on B B, and if this point is admitted, then, other things being equal, the man with the shorter thighs should be able to hold his horse tighter than a man with longer ones.

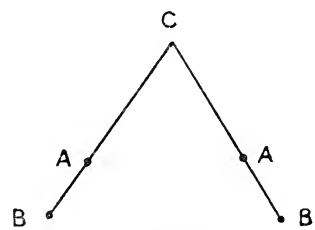


DIAGRAM VII

Certainly it is my experience that it is not the long-legged men that can keep a horse to a fence best, but the short-legged ones. I do not lay this down as a hard rule, but merely mention it for the consideration of my readers.

Although this chapter has advocated a "no-grip" principle, I do not wish to be misunderstood. In using the word "grip" I mean a definite physical effort, quite apart from mere pressure.

Pressure must be used at all times. When hacking, to keep a horse well into his bridle, and to keep him collected and balanced; and when cantering or galloping, this pressure has to be considerably increased. Unless this is done, there

is not sufficient resistance to withstand the pressure of the wind, or to prevent the whole body slipping further and further back in the saddle. Without this pressure we should immediately cease to be one with the horse, which is, after all, the whole art and object of horsemanship. The more spirited the horse, or the faster he is going, so must the pressure be increased. But with the body properly placed, and with our stirrups and reins of correct length, this pressure should be quite unnoticed both by the horse and the rider, and will affect neither. But grip is quite a different thing. It is exhausting to the rider and hampering to the horse, and should only be exercised, as I have already said, on those occasions when a difference of opinion exists between the horse and rider.

Before passing on to the subject of training, which I propose to deal with in my next chapter, the use of the spur is a matter which I would like to refer to for a moment. It is one which can be quickly and easily dealt with, but it has an importance which demands more attention than is usually attributed to it.

The spur, like the whip, should be used as little as possible. There is no question but that spurs should always be worn when riding, but there are two kinds, blunt and sharp. The sharp spur should only be used in the riding school or *manège* when teaching horses to obey the leg. It is then of the highest importance, but on all other occasions blunt spurs should be used. When using the sharp spur

it is necessary to apply it with great discretion and discrimination. Young horses, before they have learnt its application, and when either fretting against the exercises they are being asked to perform or when failing to understand the rider's intention, sometimes run into the spur, that is to say, instead of edging away from it, they force themselves into it. When this occurs, it is not only useless but wrong for the rider to push them home. The spur should be used to teach a horse to answer to the pressure of the leg, and when that cannot be done its use is at an end.

If it is found that the horse is running into the spur, it shows that he is behind his bridle, and the solution is to drop the exercise for the moment, let him walk on, and start again, after he has been "legged up."

A properly used spur should seldom produce blood. The spur is a menace only, and its full power should only be used on rare occasions.

The poet who wrote, "The horse is a hireling, thy spurs are thine own," represented the attitude of mind of, I fear, too many people, even to-day. The bloody spur is a thing all riders should be heartily ashamed of. So that when not doing riding-school work, the blunt spur should be used at all times. This particularly applies to jumping. Even with the most experienced horsemen it is impossible to prevent cutting a horse with the spur on such occasions. When training a horse to jump there are two points we aim at. The first is to get him to be fond of jumping, and

the other is to be temperate; it is an obvious impossibility to get either if the unfortunate animal knows that his sides are, as likely as not, to be torn every time he takes a jump. Not only does it do positive harm in this direction, I know of no occasion when it ever does any good. The sharp spur does not prevent a horse from running out or refusing. It doesn't help him to win a race, and it certainly doesn't make him jump better. Once a horse is in motion at any pace over the collected trot, rowels have no effect upon him at all, except to cause unnecessary pain and discomfort.

At polo, I am thankful to say, they have been abolished for some years. I only wish the same rule had been applied to racing. The blunt spur does all that is required on these occasions, and if a horse has been properly trained before he comes out hunting, they are not necessary in the hunting field either.

When the spur is applied it should be on a spot one inch behind the girth, and nowhere else. But look at a horse returning to the paddock after a steeplechase. One will find him sometimes with spur marks all over him—on the shoulders, on the loins, on the forearms, and heaven knows where else. What use it has all been in helping the horse to win a race is one of those mysteries that I have never been able to fathom. I hope I may live to see the day when the National Hunt Committee will issue an order that neither sharp spurs nor whips will be allowed. A light stick if you

will, but whips never. But whether the edict is passed or not, I am convinced that if owners issue those orders to the jockeys they will win more races, and I trust that in itself will be sufficient inducement.

The importance of the blunt spur applies equally to the show-ring. A horse does not require the application of the rowel, and I have yet to meet the rider who can get round without a mark if he wears sharp spurs. And, after all, what is the good of it?

Has any one ever seen a horse in a race go faster because the spurs were applied? We know the answer is in the negative. But has any one seen a horse (especially mares) go slower on being touched with the spur? To this question we equally know the reply will be affirmative. A "nappy" horse inclined to refuse may sometimes be induced to jump by their application, but I am very doubtful on this point. Personally, I prefer a tap on the shoulder and a firm pressure of the legs to any other form of persuasion, and my opinion is, that a horse in a race seldom, if ever, requires any further assistance. Similarly in the hunting field or the show-ring, I am convinced that the sharp spur is unnecessary and inflicts needless discomfort, not to say actual pain.

We are told, "It is no use fighting against the pricks," but I trust for once the adage may prove false. I sincerely hope that, in however small a way, my efforts in this direction may do some good.

THE APPROACH

THE question we must now ask ourselves is, what is the secret of presenting the fence to a horse, so that he will jump it off his hocks, land a comfortable distance the other side, and give us what is known as a good "feel"? We all know that out hunting it is only occasionally we get that. About two fences out of three, we get over all right, but we are quite aware that the horse was out of his stride, and jumped off his forehand. Under such circumstances we experience no feeling of pleasure, but only that of relief, when we find that he has landed safely the other side.

But when he does come up to the fence in his stride, springs off his hocks, and lands well into the next field, what a different sensation it is, and how it adds to the pleasure (and safety) of hunting! I think it is generally believed that it is too much to expect any man to reach such a standard as to be sure of his stride every time, and, in fact, that hunting people are, generally speaking, content with things as they are, and do not much worry about such higher flights of horsemanship.

But those who delight in riding for riding's sake (they are many), and who are not content with

anything less than perfection, are not satisfied unless they can put a horse at a fence in the correct way, every time. I do not believe there is a more difficult art than this, because we have to ride every horse in a somewhat different manner. Some horses are very easy, and when riding such as these we fancy we have mastered the problem, only to find ourselves woefully far from perfection when we get on to some other less temperate mount.

However, the rules are the same in all cases, it is only the application that presents the difficulty.

The first point is that the horse should be systematically trained in a riding school, or *manège* (which can be easily rigged up in any field) to the complete obedience to the leg and rein. He must be able to break into a canter from the walk, his stride must be controllable, and he must have learnt to jump on being given the "office."

One of the most common faults we see, especially when a rather larger fence than usual is to be negotiated, is a man taking what he calls a "good run" at it. He starts off as fast as possible; as he approaches the fence his horse begins to stick his toes in, and goes slower and slower (not necessarily because he means or wants to refuse, but because he is trying to get his stride right, which the rider by hustling him prevents him doing), until he reaches the fence, by which time he is almost at a standstill. He then bucks over, and if there is a ditch on the far side, he

will probably peck badly on landing. We must indeed be bold horsemen to ride horses in this manner over a big country. Of course, the exact opposite is the correct way. We should start slowly, and increase our pace until the take off, which should be the quickest stride of all, so as to get the momentum necessary to carry us well over into the next "parish."

It is not generally realized that the fence is jumped well or badly, according to the manner the rider has his horse in hand, when twelve yards away from the fence. It is here that the crucial moment is. At this spot the horse should be in a gentle canter, and under the complete control of his rider. As the horse makes his next stride, which should be quite a short one (two yards at most) the rider then must make up his mind—three strides and over. He gives the horse his head slightly, and the stride is increased to two and a half yards, again a little more head, and he covers three yards; then with a little pressure of the legs he covers three and a half yards his last stride, collects himself, and jumps the fence when six feet away from it, or just a nice distance for making a good jump. Naturally, I do not mean the distances I have just given to be taken too literally, I merely give them to show my meaning; but nevertheless, for a good performance, these distances would not be so far out.

Let us look at diagram VIII for a moment.

When the rider has reached position A, he has to make his decision. His eye can see that three

good strides will just do it nicely, and that each stride will have to be slightly longer than the one preceding it, so that by the time he has reached the take off, he has got his horse full of momentum, and is in a position to clear anything that may be the other side.

Such a condition would be perfection, but we cannot expect to do as well as that every time, even on perfectly trained horses. But we have a good deal of latitude wherein to rectify mistakes.

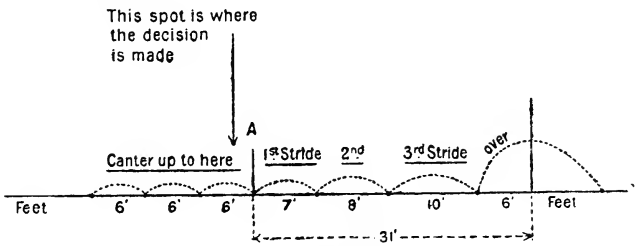


DIAGRAM VIII

For instance, we needn't make three strides; we can do it nearly as well with two. Supposing we have got a little too close with our first stride, then we can make the second a shorter one, or make two shorts. In the latter case, momentum would be lost, which would be of no importance if we knew exactly what was the other side. The principle, I hope, is clear. One, two, three, over. That is it, in a nutshell. Sometimes we do it one, two, over, and sometimes even one, over. But the best, and what is necessary for a big fence is, one, two, three, over.

But in order to get this, it is obvious that we must train our horses.

One of the most difficult things to overcome, and one which is very prevalent, is rushing. If a horse takes charge whenever he sees a fence, any delicacy of handling is an impossibility, and for the time being we are "passengers."

Another point that has to be overcome is "fretting." If a horse is anxious and fretful when he is about to jump, it is often impossible to get his stride right at point A (see diagram). Once we have got him right there, then we can "plug" him at the fence, and his fretfulness doesn't matter any more.

That is why it is so important to have a horse collected, and in hand, because unless we can be sure of his stride at that point, we cannot be sure of the remainder.

Out hunting we often don't get a chance of "putting" our horses properly, on account of the crowd, who won't give us room, but when we have shaken off the crowd, and get room to ourselves, there is no reason why we shouldn't be able to try, at any rate, to put this into practice.

With the Meath hounds, where they have deep ditches to jump almost entirely, it is their practice to take them from a standstill, and I found it a most uncomfortable and unsatisfactory proceeding. The reason they give is that if they were tackled in the ordinary manner, the horse might make a mistake, and a broken back would result, as likely as not. I hunted with this pack for four

seasons, and each year I became more and more convinced that that was not the way to negotiate those or any other fences. A broken back would be impossible as long as the rider kept his body forward, and if the horse was properly "put" at the ditch, he would clear it much more easily and with far more satisfaction to the rider, than in the manner advocated, which was to push his fore legs partly down the side of the ditch, and then make him lurch forward on to the opposite slope, from a standing position, and get him to clamber up as best he can.

Every one knows the great capacity horses have for jumping, but it is not generally recognized why it is so much more difficult to jump a big fence properly than a small one. To jump a rail three foot high is within the capacity of nearly every rider. But four feet, although still quite a small jump, is another matter, and five feet is usually considered to be quite outside the question in the hunting field. The reason for this is, that as the fence increases in height, so the difficulty of "putting" the horse at it increases in proportion.

Looking at diagram IX, a horse, it will be seen, can clear the lower rail easily if he takes off anywhere between the points A B. If he is beyond B he would be too close, if not up to A, he would be too far away to clear it. But anywhere between those two points are quite within his capacity. Now look at the higher rail. The points A B are here much closer together, so that to clear this with any certainty the rider has to

insure that he gets his horse to take off on a spot which (in very high jumping) can be measured in inches.

This is where the difficulty comes in. The horse can jump it, we all know, provided the fence is presented to him in the proper way, and we can only insure our being able to do this if he has

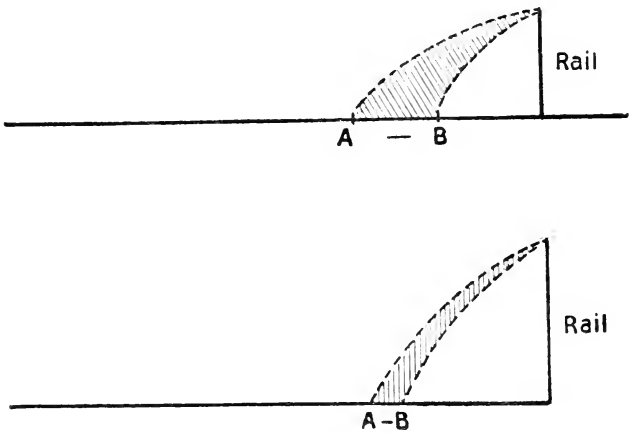


Diagram IX

been most carefully trained beforehand. We must have our horse so obedient to the leg and rein, as to be able to get him to place his feet upon any selected spot—a daisy, for example. Canter him about a paddock, and do not feel satisfied until you can get him to place his forefeet close to that daisy every time. Until we can do this we can never be sure of " putting " him with any accuracy at a fence of any real size.

I do not believe in high jumping, and have never gone in for it in any shape or form as a competition, but I do know that if a horse can jump four feet well, then he can jump any other height up to the limits of his capacity. On one occasion I was induced to put two of my horses over a rail six feet high, as an exhibition jump. The first horse I put at it was well in hand, and cleared it at the first attempt quite easily. My second horse was "fretful," and I couldn't get him to answer to the leg and rein, and when at the crucial point (about thirty-six feet away) I could not get him to place his fore feet on the spot I required. The consequence was, that I had to make several efforts before I could get his stride right. To the onlookers he appeared to be refusing, but such was not really the case, because, as I knew his stride wasn't correct, I didn't ask him to jump. But after a little while, I did manage to get him right, and at the last stride, I gave him the "office," and he was over with a good six inches to spare. I mention this to show how necessary it is to have one's horse so trained that there is no fretting, or yawing, or rushing. He must be completely obedient while approaching the fence, then we can give him his head for the last three strides, and a perfect jump will be the result.

Horses that have not been trained to jump properly, are very apt, even when they have been correctly "put" at a fence, to put in a short stride. This is due, generally speaking, to one or all of three causes: firstly, he has never been taught

to jump off his hocks; secondly, because he lacks the necessary confidence; and thirdly (and this, I am sorry to say, is the most common reason), because he knows that if he does jump at that moment, he will get a jab in the mouth.

So that not only do we have to learn how to put a horse at a fence, but we have to teach our mount to take off when we ask him, in full confidence that we will not punish him immediately afterwards for so doing, by jabbing him in the mouth, or ramming our spurs home.

Those who have read through the earlier chapters of this little book will know how to avoid being "left behind" (which the jab in the mouth denotes), and should be in a position to inculcate that confidence necessary in a horse before he will jump freely. The next chapter will deal with the methods for training the horse on those lines which will bring out to the best advantage that wonderful capacity for jumping which so many horses possess, and which can be developed to such a marked degree by patience and hard work.

TRAINING

ONE of our chief difficulties lies in the fact that we are seldom able to start training our own horses young enough. For those in the happy position of being able to breed and break their own horses the problem is more than half solved. Those who buy horses to sell again at the end of the season can do very little. They must take what they find and make the best of it. Old horses can be improved enormously, with time and patience, but the best results will be obtained if we can start ourselves with young stock and work them up under one continuous system. Results that will surprise us, because the intelligence of the horse is much greater than many people suppose, and with kind treatment it is astonishing to what a standard he can be trained. I do not believe in the whip, or any form of punishment whatsoever. The riding whip or bit of stick is extremely useful to touch a horse with on the shoulder, but as a means of punishment it is an anathema. Jumping should be made a treat, to which your horses should look forward, and it is only badly trained horses that ever refuse. Consequently it is superfluous to say that under no circumstances should a horse be touched in the mouth when jumping, and if the spur has to

be used it should be a blunt one, as I have already said.

I am no great believer in free jumping in training horses. Yearlings, and stock too young to be ridden over fences, may certainly be trained to jump *au naturel* over some very low rail as they come in to be fed. This will make them associate the jump and the rail with their dinner; it will give them confidence and make leaping attractive, but it must never be more than a couple of feet off the ground, at most.

The training and treatment of horses is in so many respects similar to how we should be trained and treated ourselves, one is seldom wrong in taking our own experiences as analogous.

Supposing we have a boy whom we wanted to do well at, say, high jumping. There would not only be no harm, but it would be strictly beneficial to allow him, when quite small, to amuse himself jumping over little obstacles, such as chairs, and what not. But if we allowed him to practise for his first competition without the aid of expert advice, we should assuredly make it harder to teach him when we eventually put him into the hands of a trainer. The expert would at once say that he would first have to get him to unlearn all he had learnt before he could start getting him into the proper style, and that it was a great pity he hadn't been allowed to have taken him in hand from the beginning.

And so it is with horses. Their early education may be started by free jumping, but it should be

so limited as to insure their not getting into bad habits. Jumping is so much a question of obedience to the rider, and of answering immediately to his wishes, that the sooner we begin riding at our fences the better.

It is very generally believed that horses should not be jumped either much or often. We are told that horses soon sicken of it, and that much jumping ruins their legs.

I will take each contention separately. I wish to lay great emphasis on the first point. Horses do not tire of jumping, provided they are properly treated (and even then they are most astonishingly long-suffering). Horses refuse because they have not been jumped enough, not because they have been jumped too often. Out hunting, I ask, which fence is it a horse most often refuses? His first, or his last? After a long day's hunt, after your fortieth fence, do you expect him to refuse his forty-first because he has got tired? If the answer is that in the one case he has the joy of the hunt in his veins, and in the other merely an artificial obstacle, I can only reply: Try and see. I can only assure my readers that the rider will tire long before the horse. I have never reached the stage myself, and I am quite confident that I never shall succeed in sickening my horse before I myself am completely exhausted.

As to affecting their legs or feet, I can only say that this is not the result from experience. The time sinews are sprained is when a horse is exhausted.

The breakdown occurs at the end of a steeplechase, not at the beginning; at the end of a long hunt, not at the first fence. Exhaustion is the only danger we have to fear. I do not, of course, refer to mishaps, such as an overreach, but I do maintain that no horse has sprained a sinew when jumping unless he has been overtaxed. It is curious how firmly the idea that jumping is a danger for horses is fixed in the minds of many hunting people. I knew one man who used to believe that every fence jumped took one day off his horse's life. No theory could have been formulated on more slender foundation, unsupported by either theory or practice, and yet his contention was accepted without question. One might as well say that exercise shortened a horse's life, or that dumb-bells in the morning shortened ours! No; exhaustion alone is the danger, the only danger we have to consider, and provided we keep to small fences the more we jump the better. The Italians say fifty jumps every day, but without binding ourselves to any definite number, it is sufficient to say that it is next to impossible to jump too much, and that if we err it will always be on the side of too little, rather than too much.

Before jumping is started, however, the usual riding-school lessons must be learnt. It is not the object of these articles to go into details which can be easily obtained in a variety of books which have been written on the subject, but merely to emphasize once more the necessity for the obedience

of the horse to the rider's hand and leg. These principles are already widely known, and require no enlarging upon.

But after we have reached a reasonable standard in this branch of our horse's education, we then have to commence riding over fences.

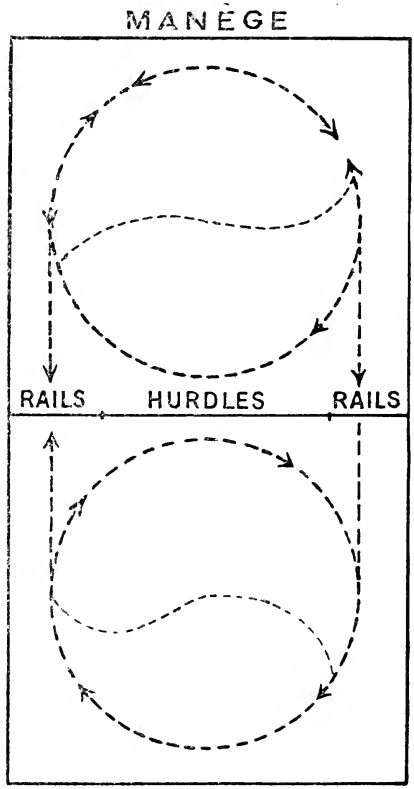


DIAGRAM X

The most common difficulty is to prevent them "rushing" directly they know they are going to jump, and this fault must be eliminated before we can even begin to consider their education has passed the elementary stage.

A good way to do this is to place a row of hurdles stretching right across from side to side of the paddock, so as to divide it into two equal parts as in diagram X,

with, preferably, three adjustable rails as jumps, one at each end of the row of hurdles, and one in the middle. Wings are not necessary or desirable.

Canter on a circle, and on each occasion you face the rail, if you find your horse quickens his stride, don't let him jump, but continue him on the circle. After a while he will begin to think he isn't going to jump, and then you can put him at it, and so get him to jump it steadily without rushing.

Directly he has done this off one rein, then change at once, and do the same thing again off the other rein. In all early training jump each fence alternately off the off fore and near fore, and always arrange for the horse to have an equal amount of training on both reins. In all this early training I must again emphasize the importance of having the rail very low, so that the horse can jump it without effort. In this way he will learn to jump off either leg, and land on the same leg, and continue his canter without any change of leg or "scuffle." Watch horses carefully as they approach a jump, and instead of cantering smoothly on whichever leg they happen to be on, it will be often noticed how they "scuffle," in doubt, in fact, which leg to jump off, or they will definitely change in order to jump off the leg they prefer. In either case they are, as likely as not, disunited, and such grave faults can only be cured before they are habits. Similarly on landing, a horse should continue on the correct leg, united and true, directly his hind legs reach the ground. Here, again,

it is common to see a bit of "scuffling," especially if they have jumped off their unaccustomed leg.

In order to test this, the management at Olympia in the year 1913, I think it was, had the course laid on the figure-of-eight plan, and it was very interesting to note the result. Many riders never thought of "changing" at all, and others who did "change" at the turns, "changed" again before jumping, showing that their horses had been trained entirely on one rein. Such matters as these are not of much importance if we are only training hunters, but they make a good deal of difference if we intend to aspire later on to higher flights. In any case it is just as easy to start in the one way as the other, and as it adds very much to the interest of training, it is to be recommended from whatever aspect we take it. A trained jumper in the field of athletics must be thinking solely of the effort he is going to make. His stride and "take off" are automatic. And so with horses. No horse can jump his best if he is constantly changing his legs.

So that before we raise our rail we should be quite sure that our horse can canter over them "true and united" on either rein at will. We must also assure ourselves that they approach the rail without rushing, that they canter up in a perfectly collected manner until within thirty feet or so of it, and then increase their pace slightly, entirely at the will of the rider, and take off when given the "office," and so jump off their hocks in every case. There should be no sign of fretting or

anxiety on the horse's part. What is necessary first is complete tranquillity.

When this standard has been reached by constant and daily exercise, then the rail can be raised. As we raise the rail, so we decrease the number of times we jump it. As I have said, fifty times a day is not too much for a low rail, say two feet high, but ten jumps at four feet six inches is probably quite sufficient, and this height should seldom be used. If a horse can jump four feet perfectly, then his training is practically complete. The rest is simple. At least it is simple as far as the horse is concerned, but every inch undoubtedly increases the difficulty for the rider, for reasons that have been explained in the last chapter.

And as the rider requires as much practice as the horse, it is necessary for us to jump a good deal at four feet six, and sometimes—just now and again—five feet, if we feel inclined that way. In fact, I advocate it strongly, because once we are accustomed to jumping big, stiff fences in our paddock or riding school, it is surprising how it helps us in the hunting field. Fences that looked so formidable before, become quite simple, and with our increased confidence we long to jump what before we had looked upon as too stiff.

Everything has an entirely different perspective. Even the "national" fences lose their forbidding aspect.

And when we learn with what ease a horse can jump four feet six, and clear perhaps twenty feet in doing so, and when we have learnt how easy it is to sit him as he does so, then we can go out

hunting knowing that there is little that can stop us; we can walk round our next point-to-point course without that "sinking" feeling as we inspect the "awesome" fences, and riding assumes a level to which we had never before either expected or hoped to attain.

In our training we require no devices for making horses lift their legs, no whips to urge them on, or spurs to keep them straight. The cure is firstly to lower the rail, and secondly to blame ourselves. Horses usually rap a rail because the rider is wrongly placed in the saddle; they refuse because they lack confidence (or exercise), or because the rider is at fault.

After having insured the jumping of the simple rail, it is then our business to introduce variety—to train the horse to jump ditches, doubles, water, drop fences, walls, in and outs, fences with ditches on the far and on the near side, and (for hunters in particular) blind ditches. But once we have mastered the post and rail of four feet high, all the remainder can be taught with great facility and rapidity.

There is only one word of warning I would give, and that is—avoid sore shins. Never jump on hard ground, and if a horse suddenly starts refusing for no apparent reason, have his shoes off at once and look for corns; and do not start blaming the horse and punishing him with the whip, but realize that horses, too, have feelings and reasons for what they do.

The jumping capacity of a horse is very wonderful, and by careful training there is hardly a fence

in England which is beyond the capacity of a schooled jumper with natural ability. I remember measuring the leap a horse of mine once made without apparent effort, and out of a hand canter. A rail four feet six inches was cleared in height, and twenty-seven feet in distance. I believe a horse has been known to jump eight feet in height, while the longest accredited jump is thirty-seven feet. Taking such known capacity into consideration, the biggest fence in the hunting field is small in comparison. There is hardly a ditch in Meath broader than twelve feet across from bank to bank, and yet what a formidable obstacle it looks! But a bold horse that was trained, and ridden by a bold rider, could negotiate such a jump as this without difficulty. But to develop the courage of a horse, he should never know what a fall is. By this, I do not mean that he shouldn't be allowed to stumble into a blind ditch to teach him caution, but that he should never be overfaced. By small beginnings, and very slow advances, his courage and confidence can be built up. He not only requires confidence in himself, but also in his rider. He must get to know by long experience that he is never asked to perform what is beyond his powers, and if jumping has always been a source of pleasure to him, and not of pain, then he will not fail when put to a supreme test. I think I am right in saying that the biggest jumps are made by four-year-old horses. They are full of the vigour and courage of youth, and have not learnt to fear a fall. The older they get the more "canny" they become, because they

have learnt to know how painful is a rap over the shins when jumping a stiff post and rails, and how sharp and prickly is a well-laid stake and bound. But if the owner is wise he will not allow them to test the strength of timber, or the sharpness of a stake, except in the very early stages of training when the obstacle is extremely small and unalarming. Never allow your horse to make a mistake if it can possibly be avoided; a mistake means that the progression has been too fast. Only ask him to jump what you know he can do without a mistake, no matter if a rail has to be lowered to a foot off the ground.

There is one more point: I do not believe in "brush" fences for training. They only teach a horse to be sloppy in his jumping, and he soon gets into the habit of going through as much as he can. Still less do I agree with furze. No one expects a horse to clear a furze fence, but, on the contrary, we know that he will go through the greater part of it. Now, how can one expect jumping to be attractive, if every time he is pricked all over, and returns to his stable more like a porcupine than a horse? The best form of jump is the stiff rail which can be lowered or raised at will, and for all early training purposes none other is required.

Before leaving the subject of training, there is still one point I wish to refer to. When out hunting, the obstacle that frightens people more than anything else is a blind ditch on the take-off side. If a rider is on an untrained horse, he has every justification for his dislike of this form of

fence. But on a trained horse there is no difficulty at all. From what I see, I have come to the conclusion that a trained hunter is an astonishingly rare animal. Hunting people generally are satisfied with far too low a standard, and make little, if any, effort at home to improve their cattle. If a horse is described as a "good hunter" either in the sale-ring or dealer's yard, they appear to accept that as final, and make no effort to improve them. In this particular instance it is very easy to overcome the difficulty, far easier than people suppose. It only requires a fence rigged up in the paddock at home, with a shallow ditch in front blinded by brambles. If the services of a rough rider can be obtained (which can usually be done without difficulty) the best way is to ride the horse over the fence, and teach him how uncomfortable and unpleasant it is to put his feet into the brambles. A safer but not quite so satisfactory a way is to lounge him over. A horse who has experienced only once or twice such an obstacle will avoid all brambles on the take-off side for the future like the devil does holy water. There need be no risk to either horse or rider, as the ditch, as a start, can be quite a shallow one, and it can be increased in depth at will according to circumstances. In this way, by just taking a modicum of trouble, we can increase our enjoyment and security when out hunting to a very appreciable extent.

There is yet one more point before finally closing this chapter. The so-called trained hunter is more often than not very troublesome to mount. A

horse that has never had any training in this small point always arranges himself so that he is on the crest of the road, or the upper side of a slope, and that at the moment of mounting his rider is on the "down" side. This makes a very considerable difference for mounting. If he is only two inches up, and you are two inches down, it represents a whole hand in height. It virtually turns a horse of 15·3 to 16·3, and as the variation in slope is often greater than this, it is frequently like a question of trying to mount a nineteen-hand horse without a mounting block. Very often there is a handy heap of stones by the roadside which would make a most convenient one. But our "good hunter" absolutely refuses to allow you to mount him therefrom, and we have to jeopardize our breeches buttons in an apoplectic effort to mount this, now, gigantic animal from the muddy gutter of the roadway. On the top of this, he often won't stand still long enough to allow you to get your foot into the stirrup iron. We keep the recording angel busy under circumstances such as these, and when at last we are safely in the saddle, we as likely as not vent our wrath by jabbing him in the mouth, and calling him, well! what you do call a horse when you are in a bad temper.

These small trials and tribulations can be easily overcome by training and a little patience. Firstly, in the stable always mount from the mounting block, and also teach the horse to stand in a gutter or drain. Never mount him until he is perfectly still. Let the groom hold him, and talk to him and pat him until

that tranquillity is attained. Then put your foot in the stirrup, and insist that there shall be still no movement. When this is attained, increase the weight on the stirrup, and then place yourself gently in the saddle. No movement of any sort should be allowed on the horse's part until you have adjusted your reins, got both feet in the irons, pulled your coat down, and are in all respects ready to start. Then let the groom stand away, and still let there be no movement. The trained horse will never move until he is given the office from the rider, and horses that do not so behave themselves cannot be considered trained. It is all so easy to do. It takes a little time, perhaps, especially with old horses that have got into bad habits, but it is time well spent, and worth every minute of it. There is nothing new in this, it is all as old as the hills, but in these busy days people are apt to forget the wisdom of the past, or to remember that our fathers and grandfathers were also men of experience and knowledge. If they did happen to live "slower" than we do, it is all the more certain that what they did know was more thorough, and in many cases more sensible than the youth of the present day would have us believe.

One final word. When preparing your jumps in the paddock, it is important to take a little trouble with the ground on the take-off and landing side. A good tip is to dig it all up first, lay fascines, and then cover them over and batten well down. This will ensure good drainage, so that your jumping can be continued in nearly all weathers.

BRIDLING

In the army, and in all places where riding-school instruction is given, "bridling" is thoroughly understood and taught. But in hunting circles it is looked upon as unnecessary. I do not mean that it is universally neglected, because there are many hunting men who do realize its importance, but I think it is an undoubted fact that a very preponderating majority of hunting people disregard this important side of horsemanship. If we ride to the meet on a horse that bridles well and is balanced in all his paces, we are called faddists. The general tendency is to laugh at those who train their horses to balance, bridle and bend, as being obsessed by the foolish dictums of the riding master, and wasting their time in "circus" tricks and fanciful *haute école.* The horse is described as "peacocky," and the rider as unpractical and un-English.

Public opinion is so strong that many young men who have experienced the pleasures of riding a balanced horse, and who would like to continue doing so, give it up when riding to hounds, and actually fear to be seen making a horse bridle in the hunting field. It is a good many years ago

now, but I remember once getting a very handsome chestnut mare, who had a beautiful neck and good forehand. A mare that was made for "bridling," and who would have been a joy to ride under such conditions. My first inclination was to put her into the riding school and make her into a "charger." But in those days I was not sufficiently experienced to disregard the opinions of those who had hunted longer than I, and who, as I then thought, knew all there was to know about what a hunter should be and should be capable of doing. "Surely you ain't going to mess her about with bending and figures of eight and all that sort of rubbish, are you? Take her out and let her learn to cross a country naturally. Leave the poor brute alone, and don't go eternally messing about with 'right shoulder in' and those silly riding-school tricks. Leave her head alone and she will leave you alone. We don't want to see any of your peacocky circus horses out with hounds," etc., etc., were the remarks that were made. The result was that I never put her into riding-school work at all. I rode her continuously for nine seasons, and every year I regretted the advice more and more that I had been given.

I cannot believe that people who argue in this way can have ever experienced the pleasure of riding a well-balanced horse. I believe the hunting public (I speak of the majority) know very little about it.

If we stand on the roadside, and watch the field arriving at the meet, what do we see? A great

number are being conveyed (I can use no other word) along with long reins, their horses' noses and necks stuck out straight in front. They are not riding to the meet, they are being taken there. There is little pleasure in such a form of exercise, and there is no skill.

The training of horses and men are singularly alike. Before we can get a man obedient to the word of command he must be drilled. We have to get him balanced before he can move. "The exact squareness of the shoulders and body to the front is the first position of a soldier . . . the weight of the body must be on the fore part of the feet," and until we get him in that position he is incapable of carrying out commands quickly and well. Imagine trying to get a ploughman, who was in the habit of standing with his back rounded and feet far apart, his chin stuck forward, and his hands awkwardly placed, to "about turn" smartly on the word of command. We know it would be impossible. Before he could execute the movement we should have to get him to stand in the "first position" before anything else. But once he was standing properly to attention he could move in any direction we wanted without any difficulty or delay. And so it is with a horse. Once we have him "balanced," he is in a position to obey the leg and rein, and to move in any direction at our slightest wish. As it is right that a man should stand and walk with his shoulders back and his head erect, so it is right that a horse should move collected. "Deportment" used to

be an important branch of our children's education, and should be so still, did parents do their duty. If horsemen did their duty they would take similar trouble with their horses. Personally, I do not think a horse is worth riding that has not been so trained. A long hack is a wearisome affair on a horse that has never been taught "the aids," and who resents the pressure of the leg and rein. But no hack is too long on a horse that has been properly taught to carry himself. Every step is a delight, and the pride of satisfaction diffuses itself to every passer-by, who, we feel, cannot but help admire the beauty of the complete unison between horse and rider, and the beautiful cadence of balanced action.

Not only is this matter important as a means of adding to our pleasures when hacking to the meet, but it is equally so from the practical point of view of assisting us throughout the day. The swinging gate, the kicking horse, the jostler and the motor-car can be avoided more easily when riding a trained horse than when on one who does not answer immediately to the pressure of the leg. When hounds are moving fast, he can be better controlled. He may be keen, but "pulling" is unknown. He can be always stopped in a moment, and his jumping should be cleaner and safer. In fact, in every respect he is a better horse. If these things are so (and I do not think there are many who will not admit it), then why shouldn't we take more trouble over the matter than we have done in the past? Many people are prepared to pay,

and do pay, very high prices for trained hunters. But are they really trained?

Some horses, we know, bridle naturally, but hundreds of so-called trained hunters are sold who have never had a day's teaching in these matters of such vital importance in a horse's education. If I were a rich man I would never ride a horse that hadn't learnt to carry himself, and I feel sure that if hunting people once realized the advantages and pleasures of riding such horses, they would take good care that none others entered their stables, provided they could afford to buy what they wanted.

I do not mean it to be supposed that I expect every member of a hunt to arrive at the meet on perfectly broken "chargers." Such an idea would be ridiculous and grotesque. But what I do mean is that the idea of riding a balanced horse to hounds should be considered as the right thing, that it should be looked upon as a matter of just pride and satisfaction, and that it should not be, as at present, regarded as both unnecessary and unpractical.

"HANDS" AND OTHER MATTERS

"HANDS"

THIS is a very interesting subject, and one upon which there may be many diverse opinions. I hope, however, that the following ideas may bring the matter into clearer focus, even though my readers may not entirely agree with me.

We are always told that hands are born, not made, and the dictum is accepted, as axiomatic. But an axiom, according to Euclid, is a statement the truth of which is so obvious that no proof is possible.

This is certainly not the case with "hands." If it were true it could be shown that no one could possess "hands" unless they had the gift intuitively. In which case they would be equally good at the first effort in the saddle as at the last. If a recruit, after his first ride, were to ask the rough rider, "Have I got good hands?" I can leave it to my readers to imagine what his reply would be. Whatever it might be, I think it would be safe to assume that it would be unprintable. It requires but little reflection to disclose the fallacy of such a statement. And yet it is widely believed. An untruth often is masked under the

cloak of repetition. "I have said it three times, and therefore it is true," is humorous because it contains an underlying sophism. In this case there is no truth in it, even though it has been repeated often. The reverse is indeed the case, for hands are made. They are only born in so far that any man who possesses balance, confidence and sympathy, possesses the potentialities of "hands." Education and practice should do the rest.

When a man is jumping a fence, and jabs his horse in the mouth, he does so because he is unbalanced, and at that moment has bad hands. But when not jumping he might have splendid "hands." Or, again, a horse shies suddenly, and the rider, in order to prevent himself from falling, hangs on to its head. At that moment his hands are extremely bad, for the sole reason that the rider is off his balance. But directly he has recovered himself he may resume riding with perfect "hands." So that it is clear that first and foremost the question must be regarded as one of balance. The next consideration is that of confidence. A man is considered to have bad hands if he is always "niggling" a horse's mouth as he approaches a fence. (This is a very common reason for a horse refusing.) The reason for his doing this is purely from a lack of confidence. A man who is riding a keen horse that is going faster than he wishes, however good his hands may be on a quieter mount, if he lacks the confidence necessary to deal with the matter, will start holding him tighter. As his confidence decreases,

his grip on the reins increases, and he ceases to be riding with "good hands."

Why is it that some horses go so well with some men and not with others? This is largely a matter of confidence. For example, a horse rears or shows temper when leaving the stable. A nervous rider starts "niggling" and makes the matter worse. A bold rider gives him his head, a kick in the ribs, or perhaps merely speaks to him, and touches him with his crop on the shoulder, and the trouble is at an end. The whole thing is entirely a matter of confidence, in cases of this sort.

Finally, sympathy is necessary. Sympathy is a virtue that embraces amongst others that of patience. It is necessary to understand sympathetically the desires, and sufferings, the eagerness, and even the thoughts of the animal one rides.

Directly a man becomes irritated and jabs his horse in the mouth, he possesses bad hands at that moment, however good they may be on other occasions. Therefore, for all horses to go well with us on every occasion, we must be possessed of these three gifts, and when we have them we have hands in the making. Therefore it can be seen that "hands" are merely a question of experience. Balance can be taught, confidence can be instilled, and sympathy grows daily with experience and knowledge. To know all is to forgive all, and the more we know the more we are ready to forgive both with men and horses.

Sometimes horses do not go so well with us as usual. Keep jogging when we want them to walk, or throwing their heads about, or "yawing" constantly. These so-called faults are not cured by a jab in the mouth, but by thinking. Perhaps the bit is uncomfortable, or a shoe is pinching, or the girth is too tight, perhaps he hasn't had enough exercise, or the saddle is touching the withers. So we should look to these things. Then the world will say, "What splendid hands he has, every horse goes so well with him."

Thus, we see, there is no mystery about it; there is nothing a child cannot understand. Balance, confidence and sympathy, these three, make up the gift of hands, and there is nothing more in it to think of or to wonder at.

The education of "hands" is, however, quite another matter. A man may be born a natural artist, but without constant training and practice his work will be of little value. So with riding, however natural a rider's gifts may be, he will never become a fine horseman without a great deal of experience. My point is that I believe the so-called gift of hands is far more common than people suppose. It is the education which is lacking, not the capacity in a very great number of cases.

People sometimes ask me how it is that good hands sometimes means playing delicately upon a horse's mouth at every stride, and yet a rider is called good who keeps his hands still. This may sound paradoxical, and yet the reply is a very simple one. At all slow paces, the walk, collected

trot, and collected canter, it may be necessary to give and take at every stride, and play upon the horse's mouth like on the keys of a piano; but at the faster paces, the gallop, and the jump, the hands should be motionless. In jumping, the horse must feel assured of complete freedom, and if on approaching a fence there is the slightest movement of hand or wrist, the boldest horse can be turned into a confirmed refuser. Here, again, it is a question of confidence. The rider that is not quite sure of himself starts "niggling." These movements are usually the involuntary contraction of highly strung nerves, and that nervousness is passed down the reins to the horse's mouth, and from thence to his brain, quicker than any wireless message. The horse is extremely susceptible to the slightest suggestion of fear on the rider's part, and that is why a horse will jump with some riders, and not with others.

The rule is quite clear, once it is understood. Let your wrists and fingers have all the play necessary for a sympathetic feel on the horse's mouth at all slow paces, but at the fast paces, and particularly when approaching a fence, then your hands should be as still and firm as a rock.

Mastery

There is another saying which is often misunderstood by a great many people. "You must show a horse that you are master, never let him defeat you."

This axiom, good enough in itself, has led to a great deal of unnecessary cruelty and misconception. We must, of course, be master, but also a great deal of tact is necessary. If a horse refuses to turn round to the right, let us say, then turn him round to the left. It doesn't matter, as long as you get him round. We can remember the incident, and cure him of it at our leisure afterwards.

If he won't jump a certain fence, don't persist in putting him at it, with whip and spur. Take him away, and rig up that kind of fence at home, and teach him to jump it, kindly and quietly. That is all. We get the horse to do what we want, in time. Tact is just as important in the equine as in the social world. Where discipline is slackest, punishment prevails. The good leader of men sees that his orders are carried out, but he controls by studying human frailties, and pardoning delinquencies. So with the good horsemaster. The use of the whip should be of so rare an occurrence as to be almost negligible. I would like to say that it should never be used, but I admit that here and there we do, very occasionally, come across instances where it is necessary. These occur when we have to overcome faults due to bad treatment or bad riding in the past. We certainly should never require a whip for any horse we had broken ourselves.[1]

And yet how often we see the whip used in

[1] Here, reference is only made to punishment. The whip used to tap a horse on the shoulder, etc., is, of course, extremely useful.

riding schools, and in the hunting field, yes, and racing too. This latter is hardly what I meant to touch upon when starting this subject, but I maintain with all conviction that never race was won yet by punishment. A touch with the whip at the right moment often saves the situation, but punishment never. How many valuable horses are ruined by the whip? How many thousands of pounds are lost to owners every year by its means? And yet it goes on. It is in the hands of the owners. It is their affair. If only they can be got to realize it, it would stop instantly. So let us hope that some who may read these few lines will pass it on.

When training horses we sometimes see, I am sorry to say, a refusing horse, a perspiring rider, and a battered whip. But has he succeeded in getting the horse to jump? He has generally to admit dismal failure. So what then has this punishment done? It has started spoiling the horse's temper. One or two more like that, and the horse is ruined for life, and no kind treatment will ever bring back that attractive disposition which nearly every horse who has been bred in the United Kingdom possesses at birth. It is a sad sight, and spoils many a day's enjoyment. But the reason of it all is that false idea of mastery.

I tried it once myself twenty-five years ago, when I was very inexperienced. It failed utterly, and I have regretted and remembered it ever since. Some time ago I tried it on a horse who was in the habit of refusing. His early training had been

faulty, and the habit had become chronic. Once more it was a complete failure, and did much more harm than good. Kindness, firmness and "tact" is, I am sure, the way to master and be master of the horses we want to train.

Shying

I have often been asked, also, what are the correct "aids" for shying. I see horses ridden wrongly so often on these occasions, I feel it is a point that may be of interest to many of my readers.

If left to himself, a horse naturally turns his head to the object, and in doing so his quarters fly out across the road. The result being that, instead of having his body parallel with the road, it is transverse to it.

And it is this position we wish to avoid. Many riders accentuate this, in believing that it is necessary to make the horse look at the object at which he is shying, and so pull the inward rein. But this is the wrong way. The rider should, on the contrary, pull the outward rein, so as to keep the horse's head straight in the direction we wish him to go, and put a strong pressure on the outward leg, so as to keep his quarters from flying out. In other words, supposing the object happens to be on the left of the road, the rider should pull the right rein, and close the right leg, the object being, throughout, to keep the horse parallel with the sides of the road the whole time. If we desire to let the horse have a good look at the object, so

that he may learn what it is, turn him round, after he has passed it, and walk him up to it, all the time being careful to see that we keep him parallel with the direction we wish him to go, and not transverse to it.

When on the subject of shying, there is one word I would like to say, and that is in reference to stables. The best kind of stables are loose boxes, which have half-doors, each looking out into the yard, which should be kept open the whole day. So many stables are so built that a horse has nothing to do but to stare at a blank wall for twenty-two hours out of twenty-four every week-day, and twenty-four hours out of twenty-four on Sundays. How can we expect much intelligence from animals so housed?

But with those stables that have half-doors opening on to the yard, directly we open them, see how instantly every head is out! Horses so treated seldom shy when out. They become accustomed to the ordinary sights which are the accompaniment of association with man, such as wheelbarrows, haycarts, motors, dogs, and bicycles, etc., etc. Animals accustomed to such sights and sounds will not shy at a heap of stones on the road-side, or even a motor-lorry when one comes along. It is, after all, only a matter of common sense, and yet how many expensively built stables have been erected where these principles are either over-looked or disregarded. Even in those stables so built, the stud groom often insists on keeping the doors shut, for fear his horses should lose the bloom on their coats. And yet, it is of such importance

that horses should be allowed to look out! They are also a gregarious race, and enjoy being able to see, and, possibly (who knows?), to communicate with each other. And yet, it is considered right to place our horses in solitary confinement!

Personally, were I building stables, I would not only have loose boxes looking out into the yard, but I would have railings between the boxes, along the upper half of the partitions, so that the horses could always see each other, and know that they had the company of their kind. These may be regarded as small points, but I believe that attention to these kind of details repay us well. I have often heard people say the horse is a stupid animal, but what do we do to cultivate his intelligence? Personally, I do not consider the horse a stupid beast. He has much more intelligence than people believe. It is our duty, and it should be our pleasure, to develop it as much as we can.

Bitting

I have never been able to quite understand why so much attention is paid to this subject. We find in many people's stables a whole armoury of bits, some with rough mouthpieces, some with smooth, some with joints in them, and some without. Sliding mouthpieces, gags, mohawks, Hanoverians, pelhams, and snaffles of every kind and description.

And yet what is it all for? If you make the horse comfortable, he will make you comfortable, is an excellent rule, and it is obvious that the

horse is not made comfortable in gags or instruments of torture like Hanoverian pelhams and such-like. Neither can bits lessen the strength or excitability of a horse. The more we hurt him the more we increase his excitability, and the more we ruin his temper.

If one cannot ride a horse with comfort in an ordinary double bridle, one cannot ride him better in anything else. At least that is my experience, and I have seen a good deal of it, one way and another. A big strong horse may require a somewhat longer bar, but that is the only difference that is required. There is some curious old saying that there is "a key to every horse's mouth," which, being interpreted, means, I suppose, that some bit somewhere has been invented that will make that particular horse go comfortably. It may be so, but it is not my experience. It is not the bit that matters, it is the riding. If we find a horse too big and strong for us, or too keen, or too fretful, let us admit it, and dispose of him to some one who may like him better. But, for heaven's sake, do not go on trying one severe bit after another in the hope that by sheer cruelty we shall be able to force him to do our will, or that we shall be able to alter his character through the agency of pain. If we train ourselves as well as train our horses, we shall find that all these various devices are unnecessary, and that the proper place for all these wonderful bits is not the stable, but the museum. Some people are much exercised if a horse puts his tongue over the bit, and use all sorts of devices to try and prevent his doing so.

I have never found any of these effective for any length of time, and also I don't mind in the least if he does put his tongue over the bit. I don't see that it matters. He will put it back again when it suits him; and when it doesn't he won't. But this is certain, that the more comfortable he is, the less excited he will be and the less he will do it; and furthermore, I have never been able to tell (without looking) whether he has his tongue so placed or not. And if that is the case, what is there to bother about?

Of course, when training a young horse we must certainly do all we can to prevent his acquiring the habit of getting his tongue over the bit, as he will never acquire a good and delicate mouth if he does so. But I am not referring to the bitting of a young horse. I am thinking of the conversations I often hear in the hunting field, from people who are chiefly concerned in riding horses which they have bought as trained hunters.

No. If a horse doesn't go quietly with us, let us not blame the horse, but ourselves. Let us ask ourselves, what are we doing wrong? Possibly a little more exercise and a little less "skof" for both might prove beneficial, but a stronger and more cruel bit, never. Horses often merely fight for freedom (like mankind), and once given that freedom will go quietly. A little sympathy and a little confidence (which is two-thirds of the gift of hands) will do more than all the bitting devices in the world. Away, then, with your gags, and your Hanoverians, and all those contrivances only worthy of the dark ages, and let us stick to simple

double bridles, and try to ride a little better ourselves before we blame our horses, or change our bits.

If a horse carries his head too low when galloping, I find the best solution is, not to ride him in a gag, but to let him have his head. It very often happens that directly he finds the rider isn't going to carry his head for him he raises it of his own accord. But if he insists on carrying it low, it is probably due to conformation or a confirmed bad habit, and no bit will improve him.

Snaffles

Another question I am often asked is whether it is right to ride with a snaffle only.

I do not think it can ever be right to bit a horse in this way, except for racing and exercise with a groom. The expression "a perfect snaffle mouth" is often seen in advertisements, but what that means I do not know. Nearly every horse can be controlled in a snaffle, if the rider has sufficient strength to do so, and in that way we can, perhaps, place all horses in that category. But if it means that the horse in question will bridle, and collect himself in a snaffle just as well as in a double bridle, then, I can say, I have never met such a horse, and I don't expect I ever shall. There are horses, certainly, that have extremely light mouths, and too light indeed for many riders, and under those circumstances it is better for them to be ridden by these riders in snaffles. But for riders who possess good hands, and are accomplished horsemen, I am convinced that those

horses will go better in a light double bridle, like a Ward-Union, for example. I consider that this is the best all-round bit, and is quite as suitable for the lightest-mouthed horses as for horses not so delicately fashioned.

Standing Martingales

For some reason people are averse to hunting, and still less steeplechasing, in standing martingales. It is supposed, I believe, to interfere with the horse in the event of a fall. But I think this idea must have been started before the days of photography, because, when horses fall, they do not throw their heads out, but tuck them in. And I have never met an instance where a standing martingale, adjusted to the right length, has or could in any way affect a horse either when he jumped, when he landed, or when rising from a fall.

Personally, I consider they are the only martingales that should ever be used, and that they should be always worn. Firstly, because they have the advantage of leaving the reins free. An ordinary martingale, whether it be fixed on the snaffle or bit reins, interferes very considerably with the play on the horse's mouth, and prevents all delicacy. It is like trying to play the piano with a duster over the keys. Also the running martingale does not stop a horse throwing his head up as high as he chooses, so that it does not prevent the rider getting an occasional bang on the nose.

Secondly, the standing martingale does keep a horse from throwing up his head when approaching a fence.

Keen horses have a knack of doing this, and it is often difficult to get their heads down in time for the "take off," and many a fall has been occasioned thereby.

Thirdly, it prevents a horse being able to jerk the reins over his head. This occurs quite fairly often, and is particularly noticeable when going fairly fast, as in a point-to-point, when some mistake has been made. The horse throws up his head because he has been jabbed in the mouth, or from some other cause, and the rider when he has re-established himself in the saddle finds his reins both on the same side of the horse's neck.

All these things are avoided by the standing martingale, and as they do not interfere in any way with a horse's jumping, I have often wondered why they are not universally adopted in place of the other kind.

Twisting Stirrup Leathers

While on the subject of saddlery, here is a little tip which is useful. Before mounting give the stirrup leathers a twist, so as to make the iron hang at right angles to the horse's sides instead of of parallel to them. This will be found of great assistance if, at any time, one happens to lose an iron, as it can then be picked up on to the foot without any difficulty.

Every one, even the best riders, loses an iron occasionally, and without this little assistance it is sometimes very difficult to get hold of the iron again, and even when that has been accomplished it is, as often as not, the wrong side. It is a matter that can be done in a moment. Do not do it by merely twisting the leather round and round, but do it by taking hold of the leather just above the iron, and giving it one sharp twist.

So that before mounting one should see that one's stirrups hang as in diagram XI.

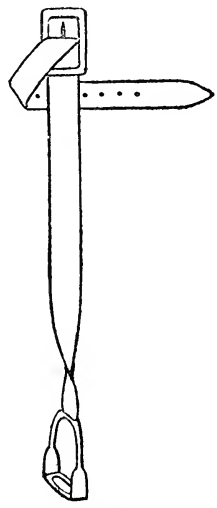


Diagram XI

A Good Leg for Riding

I think that nearly every one who was asked what a good leg for riding was, would say that it should be long and thin. I know that when we see a man with a very small calf, his friends speak of it with admiration, and say "what a splendid leg for a boot he has." I think we all know of many men who have large calves who deprecate the fact, because they think they haven't got a good riding leg. Certainly a large calf doesn't look quite so well, but, I think, their owners have been the better blessed of the two. We do want calves in riding as well as in

any other exercise, and I feel that we are really on wrong lines when we envy the man without them. On the contrary, I think he should envy the man with a well-developed leg, because the calf is of great assistance in every way, and that a good leg for riding is not necessarily a good leg for a boot.

Horse Management

Hitherto I have purposely avoided any discussion on horse management, because it is a subject that is thoroughly well known in Great Britain. There are already many books on the subject, and it would require a far abler pen than mine, and would also be far beyond the scope of my endeavours to deal with so large a subject. My only idea has been to deal with horsemanship alone, and to touch lightly upon a few points in which dubiety or error seem to hold ground. There are, however, a few matters which I may be excused dealing with. They are just some random notes which may be of interest. Not, perhaps, of any great importance. But small things go to make up the happiness of horses as well as men. The first is the question of how often and how long a horse should be out hunting. Although this is very old ground, the fact that I so often see the principles broken must be my excuse, and I write in the hope that even though the subject is old, there is still room for a little enlightenment, or at any rate originality in expression.

Taking an ordinary day's hunting, with only one horse out, a horse does best if he is not out of his stable for more than six hours. That is to say, if he leaves at 10 a.m. he should be back again at 4 p.m. If this is done systematically, then that horse should be able to hunt two days a week regularly with a rider of ordinary weight. He will keep hard and fit, and lameness, apart from accidents and constitutional diseases or ailments, will be rare.

It is well known that horses do not sprain themselves when they are fresh, it is only when they are tired. So that if we never ride a tired horse, we should seldom, if ever, get sprains. Personally, I do not understand why we should want to ride a horse when he is tired. It should be no pleasure, and it is dangerous. Hunt servants have no choice in the matter, but I speak of the free members of a hunt. They can come home when they wish, and it is unreasonable for them to continue with hounds when there should be little pleasure in doing so. So that, as far as possible, their aim should be not to have their horses out for more than six hours at a time. If they carry this maxim into effect, then, as I have said, they could reasonably expect to hunt their horses two days a week. Let us suppose they hunt one horse on this system on Mondays and Thursdays.

Now, supposing on a certain Monday they have kept that horse out seven hours instead of six. Then he is not fit to hunt again until Friday. If

he has been out eight hours on the Monday, then he will not be ready till the following Saturday. If he had been kept out ten hours on the Monday, then he would not be fit for hunting again under a week—or until the Monday following.

To put this statement axiomatically we can say, "A horse can hunt regularly throughout the season, two days a week, provided he has not left his stable on each occasion (under ordinary conditions) for more than six hours. Every hour he is out over and above those six hours, defers his hunting capacity by one day.

This is only a little rule of my own. I do not mean to lay down any hard law, which many may disagree with. It is only intended to help some of my less experienced readers, who may like to know of a good working rule that will get the most out of their horses without overtaxing them.

Drinking when Hot.—After a long day's hunting it is the custom not to let a horse drink but a few mouthfuls on his way home. A long draught is supposed to give him colic. I do not think there is any reason for this supposition. Provided we are not going to ask him for any further efforts, I do not think there can be any objection to letting him drink as much as he likes.

It is just the same as for ourselves. When hot and tired after a strenuous game of tennis, most of us do drink copiously. Just as much as we want, in fact. But if we had not finished, and had another set to play, then it would be most unwise to do so. And so with horses. If we

always treat them with the same rules that apply to our own comfort and health, we shall never be far wrong. So that when we have finished our day's hunting, or concluded our polo, then they will be all the better for being allowed to drink as much as they require.

Rugs.—The same thing applies to rugging up. When we are steaming hot after our tennis, we don't put a greatcoat on immediately, when the sight of it is actually repulsive. We wait a few minutes until we have cooled somewhat, and then put on warmer clothes. So in like manner is it with a horse. Do not rug him up until the sweat on him is beginning to turn cold. That is the time for rugs, and not till then. I often think how a horse must hate it, when really hot, to have a horribly heavy woollen rug thrown over him. But as he is unable to protest, many people don't quite realize it.

Bran Mashes.—There is another point which is grounded deeply into all grooms, so deeply that it will perhaps never be eradicated. It is that whenever a horse comes back from hunting, he must have a hot drink, followed by a bran mash. This idea is only of importance when a horse comes back exhausted, which (apart from hunt servants) is a condition they should be seldom in with good and judicious riding. Of course, like ourselves if we come back in an exhausted condition, a horse requires all the stimulant possible, and his digestion should not be overtaxed with hard corn. But if he is not in this condition, what then? Like

ourselves, he will require a good hearty meal, and as far as my horses are concerned, I always see that they have it. I also believe that what they like best on return to the stable is a couple of bucketsful of good clear water, and not hot meal or linseed and water. If you doubt this statement, try putting the two side by side in his box as he returns, and see which he will choose. Six hours under the saddle, under ordinary conditions, is not exhausting to a horse. If he is in hard condition it is little more than a good exercise. And if that is admitted, why treat him like an invalid on his return? It is only a minor point, but it is worth thinking over.

Colic.—If a horse shows signs of colic, walk him about and never let him lie down. This rule is universally accepted. It seems to be almost the first thing anybody ever learns about stable management. It is so general that no one ever seems to have questioned its value, and "walking about" is sometimes taken as the necessary recipe for other ailments as well, and some people even have been known to think that it is wrong to let horses lie down at all. I remember some many years ago, when I was the orderly officer, I was going round stables and had some difficulty in finding the sentry. On meeting him eventually in one of the stalls, I asked him what he had been doing. "Oh, sir," said the sentry, a young recruit, "all the horses will keep lying down, and it takes me all my time to keep poking them up!"

He, too, had heard of the colic rule, and like many other people, had misinterpreted it.

I believe that if a horse does lie down under the pains of colic, the chances of his twisting his intestines are so remote they may be disregarded. But still the custom prevails, and is the cause of a great deal of unnecessary hardship to horses. I know that if a human being has pains in his stomach he lies down at once, and would be very much annoyed if some one were to come and parade him up and down his room. And if we treat horses as we do ourselves in all matters of management, we shall never be far wrong, and I appeal to our veterinary surgeons to assist us in correcting this practice. It may be necessary sometimes to take the horse away from a stall where he might get hung up, but where this has to be done, he should be led to the nearest grass spot, and be allowed to lie there as long as he chooses.

Tails

In a civilized country such as ours, it is lamentable that the cruel and senseless practice of docking horses' tails should be as prevalent as it is. That it is cruel is too obvious to need comment. Every one who orders a horse's tail to be docked must know that he is not only inflicting terrible pain, but also that he is depriving the animal he affects to care for of its only means of protection against that pest of flies which worry the unfortunate animal throughout all the summer

and autumn. It is, therefore, not my purpose to labour this point. No one except a madman would mutilate his animals without an object, and, consequently, it is this aspect of the question I wish to discuss with my readers for a few minutes. One reason is that it is supposed to set off a horse's quarters, and make him look "smarter." This is nothing more nor less than a question of custom. How very odd the most charmingly dressed lady of to-day would look were our eyes attuned to the fashion of the crinoline. And were we to take our docked horses, which we think so smart, to Russia, where the practice of docking is non-existent, they would excite nothing but ridicule. As we ridicule the crinoline as an absurdity of our grandparents, so we should to-day not ridicule but rage at the horse-owner who mutilates his horses for his own gain or personal satisfaction.

Another reason given is that it prevents a horse switching his tail over the reins, when being driven. But, as a matter of fact, a horse with a short, stumpy tail is far more likely to get the reins under them and retain them there than if he has a long, flowing tail. But unless the reins are raised by a rein-bracket this will sometimes occur in any case. The simple and obvious remedy is to provide your trap with these, if it doesn't already possess them. To put this solution in its most material form, it is cheaper to do this than pay a veterinary surgeon fees for docking.

For polo ponies it is sometimes urged that a

long tail gets in the way of the stick. But the obvious answer to this difficulty is to plait the tail up while playing. Not only that, but I believe that the tail is necessary for a polo pony in helping it to turn quickly.

There are, therefore, no reasons for docking, but there are many against it.

A horse that is docked, when worried by flies soon wears his feet out with his ineffectual stamping, and a docked horse seldom benefits by the rest he should have when turned out to grass. He is frequently difficult to groom, resenting any one approaching or touching his mutilated tail, and it is frequently the cause of a horse bolting when in harness.

I have heard it said that docking strengthens a horse's back. But such a statement is, I think, hardly worth considering. It is, in my opinion, so fallacious, it needs but little consideration to dismiss it as absurd.

As all true horse-lovers are unanimously against this monstrous and useless practice, the matter rests with us. If we will all agree, hunting and driving people, polo players, owners, trainers, show-ring judges, and carthorse owners, never to have a docked horse in our stables, or award one a prize in the show-ring, then the practice would cease instantly. It is "up to us," so let us start here and now.

I can hear some one saying, "Oh, yes, that is all very well, but some horses have nasty curly tails, and what are you going to do with them?

They can never be made to look decent." Quite so. But a curly tail will be always curly whether it is docked or not. The solution is to trim it and brush it more carefully, and make the best of it.

This brings me to the subject of pulling tails, and I feel I would like to say a few words about this; not because I myself am as nearly well qualified as many others to speak, but because I do see so many people riding to hounds who obviously do not know how a tail should be turned out, that perhaps a few words on the subject will not be out of place.

In the summer time the tail should be allowed to grow its full length, but in winter it is better, for keeping it out of the mud, to have it well shortened. It should firstly be remembered that the thickest part of the tail should be its end. Not thick in the middle and tapering to a bedraggled point, but ending square and full thus:—

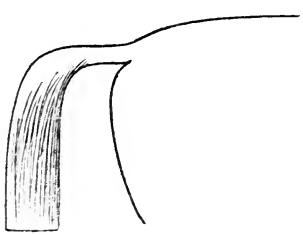


Diagram XII

When the horse is carrying his tail the end should be horizontal as shown. In order to attain this,

when cutting the tail the line should appear to run upwards towards his ears so:—

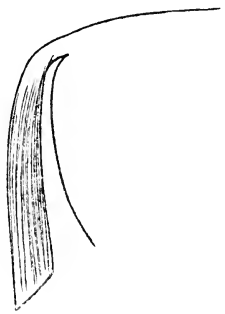


Diagram XIII

otherwise directly he starts walking it would hang thus:—

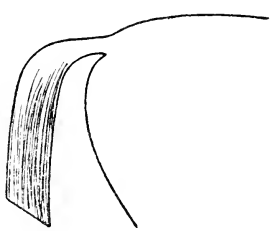


Diagram XIV

A horse doesn't mind a few hairs being pulled at a time, but the tail gets naturally a little tender if too much is done at one sitting.

The best rule is to set aside one day a week for improvements. In that way the tail is kept

always smart, but the amount of pulling required each time is very little.

I can give my readers no advice on how to trim a docked tail. I know nothing about it.

In order to attain this fullness at the bottom, it must be remembered that no hairs should be pulled except the short ones near the root of the dock, and then only underneath.

Near the root a good deal of unnecessary feathering grows which is neither useful nor ornamental, and these hairs are the only ones that should be removed. But no hairs should be pulled, whether short or long, which are on the top of the tail. They should be carefully brushed and made to lie flat.

The following diagrams will show my point.

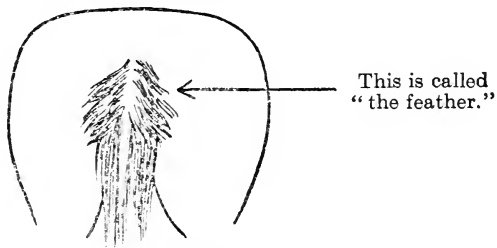


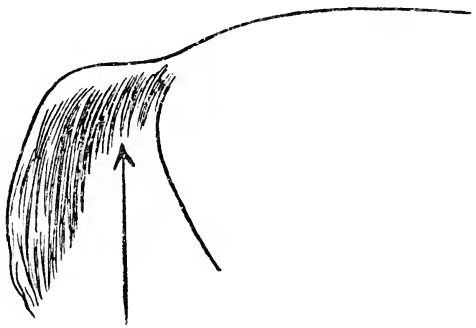
Diagram XV

Get rid of these underneath "feathers" and brush the top ones carefully downwards.

These hairs should be pulled, or cut with a scissors.

Ignorant grooms so often mangle tails that they look as if the rats had been at them. Once a tail

has been badly pulled, it takes months to rectify the mistake. So that I must strongly recommend any of my readers who have not the advantage of having competent stud grooms, to supervise this delicate matter personally. It is far better to do too little than too much, because the one can be rectified and the other cannot. Also it must be



These hairs should be removed.

DIAGRAM XVI

remembered that it is not very pleasant for the horse to have much done all at once.

The reason for pulling instead of cutting a tail is not often clearly understood, and many people will be surprised at my advocating cutting the hairs with scissors. As far as the subsequent growth of the hair is concerned it doesn't matter in the least whether it is cut or pulled. And as cutting is painless it is always to be advocated provided that the actual roots of the particular offending hairs can be

discovered. Sometimes it is very hard to find them, and then when trying to cut them off, it would be very easy to make a mistake. Under such circumstances the hairs should be pulled, but generally speaking, it is simpler, better, and less painful to the horse to use scissors.

Riding for Children

One hears it so often said that it is necessary to start riding young to become a really first-rate horseman, that it is apparent that this idea must be widely and generally accepted. Speaking personally, I do not hold this view. After many years' experience in a cavalry regiment, I have seen many officers join, some who have ridden from their youth up, and some who have never seen a horse before. Of the two, I prefer those who have never ridden to those that have; they are easier to teach, and have no bad habits to unlearn. And whatever advantage the "experienced" recruit officer possesses at the outset quickly vanishes as the training progresses. So that, certainly as far as my experience goes, it is clear that riding as a youth is not essential to good horsemanship. But I go much further than that. I consider that it is, if not actually harmful, it may be productive of much more evil than good. If boys were always taken out under highly qualified instructors, it might not be so bad. But many children are taken out under the care of a groom whose instruction is not only worse than

useless, but is frequently of a most harmful nature. Extraordinary "yarns" are spun them, and such faults as they attempt to correct are on false suppositions, while the most glaring errors are allowed to pass without comment. With those children who only go out with their fathers the case is somewhat better, but I ask, with all due deference, how many fathers are really capable of good instruction? It is an art in itself, and even first-class riders find the task rather beyond them. It is by no means so easy as one might suppose.

Apart, however, from the question of instruction, I cannot believe that it can be good for children to hunt. Short rides under supervision will do no harm, but their little legs, and arms, and muscles are quite ill-adapted to riding for long periods even on quiet ponies. Accidents are common, and many a man has had his nerve quite destroyed by riding as a child. I think every one can recall incidents of accidents which have been occasioned through inexperience, or from insufficient strength to control their mounts. Another reason is that children who are keen—and some of them are very keen—do not like to go home when hounds are running, or if their parents still remain out. This often leads to their coming back overtired, which brings in its train a variety of disorders, nervousness, perhaps, being the most common. Or again, a bad fall may ruin a child's nerve. He may never be able to get on a horse again, after some unfortunate and perhaps painful incident. No. Taking all things into consideration, one cannot advocate

riding for children. I consider eighteen quite young enough for a boy or a girl to begin, because they will be none the worse horsemen or horsewomen in after life for having deferred their initiation, although no one is fonder than I of seeing youngsters enjoying themselves in the saddle.

I remember once, as a boy, taking a "voluntary" when out with hounds. My coat was very dirty, but the horse was spotlessly clean. This was a situation which very much affected my *amour-propre*, and was not to be tolerated for a moment. So I seized some mud and carefully plastered my horse's head with it. The idea was splendid, and only required secrecy to make it a success. Unluckily I was seen doing it! and it was a long time before I heard the last of that little dissimulation!

Children certainly learn much of the unwritten laws of the hunting field if taken out by their parents, of its amenities and manners, but, speaking personally, I do not think I ever learnt much riding, and I want those of my readers who have not had the opportunity of riding in their teens to take courage and remember that they have every bit as good a chance as those that have in becoming first-rate horsemen. It is not necessary to ride young to ride well.

The Diagonal

When writing on the length of the stirrup in a previous article, I suggested that on the hack home from hunting it is advisable to let the

stirrups out a hole in order to make it more comfortable for the rider. The point I want to touch on here is to do with the comfort of the horse. It must be remembered that when a horse is trotting, his off fore and near hind both touch and leave the ground almost simultaneously. Similarly his near fore and off hind. Now, when we rise in the saddle at the trot, the body rises and falls to the cadence of one or other of these pair of legs, diagonally situated. Hence, when we trot, we trot upon one diagonal or the other. A horse that has been properly trained will be quite accustomed to the rider using either, and will trot perfectly true in each case. But most horses have not been so trained, and it will be found that a definite habit has been established to throw the rider on to the diagonal to which the horse is accustomed. Generally they always break into the trot off the same leg, so that the rider will find himself, without knowing why, always rising and falling on the same diagonal. This is, as I have said, due to bad training, and should be rectified as quickly as possible. The reason for it being bad is that the horse always takes the weight of the rider on the same two legs, and equally uses the same muscles for throwing the rider up. Directly the diagonal is changed, then the strain is immediately shifted from those two legs on to the other two, and the opposite and corresponding muscles are brought into use.

The knowledge of this fact is very important in long-distance riding, and of course to a lesser

degree when out hunting. When riding a tired horse home, for example, it is a great relief to him if this is done. But it can only be done if the horse has been accustomed to be so ridden. If not, it sometimes happens that his action is entirely different on the other diagonal, is both ungainly and uncomfortable, and very tiring to the rider. It sometimes also happens that he refuses to be ridden in that way, and will quickly place the rider back on to the old diagonal, by putting in a short stride. Much quiet amusement can be had when out hacking, in seeing the artifices horses will adopt to put the rider back on to the diagonal they prefer. The short stride is the most common, and is usually adopted to begin with. If they find that doesn't work, then they will try a little shy, or perhaps "break." These last two schemes are always successful, because by the time he has been collected again the rider is always back on the old diagonal. It does not take a second, however, to get back again. All that is necessary is to stand in the stirrups for what is actually one stride, but which feels like a half-stride. A good rule is to stand in one's stirrups, count "one," and sit down again. That will always put the rise and fall on to the opposite diagonal.

In long-distance riding, which, as far as I know, has never been attempted in England, it is usual for the riders to ride five kilometres on the one diagonal, and then five kilometres on the other. The only approach to a long ride in England, that I am aware of, took place in 1914. It was only

from London to Aldershot, and it had to be done in three and three-quarter hours, although this can hardly come under the category of long-distance riding. I, for one, who took part in it, certainly changed my diagonal every four miles, and I know that my horse came in quite fresh at the end.

An interesting little problem which can with advantage occupy one's thoughts when out hacking is, when walking, to decide beforehand which diagonal you intend to use, then to break into a trot, and see if you have been successful. Until one knows the "tip" it is not at all easy. The way to do it is this. Supposing we decide on the near fore, off hind, diagonal. Then you must watch the action of the near shoulder, and as you give the "office" to the horse to trot, you must rise in the saddle only at the moment when the near shoulder is back, so that we sink in the saddle at the moment when that shoulder is forward, or in other words, when the near fore touches the ground. But even with this it cannot be done without a little practice. A few attempts, however, will be sufficient, and it will be found a very interesting little experiment.

For cavalry work, when long-distance riding may have to be done, it is of great importance to study this matter, and I think that all recruits should be trained so that when they are trotting on the right rein in the school they could rise and fall on the off fore diagonal, and when trotting on the left rein they could be on the near fore diagonal; but as this is a matter for our military

authorities, it is outside the scope of this little book, which only has as its intention the dealing with hunting and civilian matters.

Testing Staying Power of Horses

Here is another "tip" which may be new to some of my readers. Supposing we want to find out if a horse is likely to "stay" well, but have no facilities for proving it. The following method gives one a very good guide. Take the horse along with another (a well-known stayer for choice), and canter or gallop them round a paddock, just far enough to exercise their lungs, and have them pulled up close to where two people are standing, and let each, at a given moment, start counting the breathing of the respective horses, and compare the difference. Taking twenty as the number decided upon, if the trial horse has only made eighteen breaths to the other's twenty, then it can be safely said that he is a natural stayer; if he has taken twenty-four or twenty-five, then we can equally feel assured that he is not likely to "stay" well. Training will improve a horse's fitness and muscle, but the natural cadence of inhalation and exhalation remains much the same no matter what has been done previously.

Show-Ring Jumping

At the International Horse Show at Olympia one of the most common remarks is, "How can you

expect a horse to jump with all this crowd looking on, and all these damned flowers?"

Those, however, who have taken pains to train their horses, know that neither lights, nor crowds, nor flowers, nor bands matter in the least. A horse will do what he has been accustomed to do, put him where you will. He must be able to see his fences clearly, and as long as he can do that he will jump both cleverly and well, provided he has been trained beforehand.

Remarks such as these are merely idle excuses for failure, and our foreign guests, who must have often overheard such statements, must have smiled inwardly at hearing such expressions coming from "the nation of horsemen."

Do we not know that music does not adversely affect horses? If we don't, it was a fact known to Job, the writer of one of the oldest books extant. Have we not read that "He saith amongst the trumpets, ha, ha"?

No, indeed. It is neither the music, nor the lights, nor the crowd, nor the flowers that affect him. But if he knows he is going to receive a pretty fair dose of the whip directly he sets foot in the arena, he very naturally puts up all the protest of which he is capable. A horse cannot be made as afraid "as the grasshopper," but he will show a very righteous temper if he knows he is in for an unjust hammering; and is there any one who would disagree with him were they in his place?

Point-to-Point Racing

There are quite a considerable number of people who believe that point-to-point racing makes horses "hot" and ruins their manners. But I can assure them that such is not the case. Horses when reaching the ground upon which they do their gallops will sometimes show a little excitement (particularly if they associate the gallop with whip and spur). Even in such a case their so-called keenness is merely unwillingness to approach the training ground. But take them away from that association and their excitability vanishes. Most polo ponies walk on to the polo ground most unwillingly. If galloping made horses "hot," then we should see them jumping about and creating all sorts of trouble. Even "blood" two-year-olds, who often give much bother at the starting gate, can be seen daily in their strings walking or trotting about quite quietly.

And so it is with a hunter. A horse that is quiet with hounds will be always so, whether he has run a point-to-point race or not. I put this matter to the test once in the following way. I had a mare who was as "hot" as you make 'em, and I had had to spend weary months in getting her to jump her fences quietly. I entered her one day for a steeplechase, and I was urged not to by my friends, who told me I should undo all the good I had previously done. In the race she simply "eat up" her fences, but the next time I asked her to jump a rail collectedly there was no difficulty

whatever, and she jumped as if she had never raced over fences in her life.

I do not think people generally give horses sufficient credit for intelligence. A horse that has been well treated will do practically anything required of him, as long as he does really understand what is wanted and has been shown how to do it. Most of our troubles with horses are our own fault. They are frightened at the prospect of punishment and nervous of falling, and when in that condition are very "stupid" indeed. But once he has gained confidence, then he can be raced, or hunted, or hacked, or jumped, and he will be the same with us every day—a "trusted, well-beloved" servant, because the confidence is mutual.

But this standard cannot be attained with horses that have been spoilt in the past. Once it has gone it will never return. A horse that, because he has been overfaced as a youngster, has taken to refusing, may never entirely lose the habit. A horse that has once been sickened of racing may never be made to race again. So that very much depends upon how we train our young horses, and those of us who are unable to keep or train young stock must suffer for the misdeeds of stable lads, or farmers' boys, or rough riders. The faults are irremediable then, but the blame must rest upon the right shoulders.

Horses will be "hot" in accordance with their nature, and it is not a question of whether they have been galloped or not. The "hottest" horse

can be made perfectly quiet by exercise, and the quickest way to get him in that condition is to gallop him, provided his legs are sound enough. The best way is to have him out hacking four hours a day, at six miles an hour.

Show-Ring Jumps

In the United Kingdom, I think, we lack a little originality in making obstacles in the show-ring. We are all too accustomed to seeing nothing else but a gate, a wall, a rail and a water-jump. In Ireland it is somewhat different. There they have banks, stone walls, but marking is in these cases much more difficult. We have the same or practically the same courses year after year, and yet there are a great number of varieties which could be erected. Some novelties are undoubtedly wanted, and to get ideas we cannot do better than imitate some of the courses which have been made on the Continent, where things are better done, I think, than with us.

One course which I had the pleasure of riding over, and which I thought at the time was an exceptionally good one, was as follows:—

(1) Preliminary bush fence.

(2) An "in and out." This represented a roadway with a post and rails on each side of it, so that the first rail had a ditch on the far side, and the second a similar ditch on the near side. The rails were about 4 feet 3 inches in height, and the ditch was roughly 4 feet broad—a capital jump for testing a hunter.

(3) A wall, 4 feet 6 inches.

(4) A post and rails, 4 feet 6 inches.

(5) A rail on a bank, the whole 4 feet 6 inches.

(6) A bank. This was a really big one, 8 feet high, and very much more formidable than the big bank in Dublin. In this case it was a kind of double bank, suggesting an aqueduct.

(7) A "piano" jump. This consisted of a small ditch full of water, then a low bank with a flat top, at the end of which was a low post and rails, over which one dropped on to the level again.

A comparatively easy obstacle, but on account of its unusual nature is a very good test of the obedience of the horse and his confidence in his rider.

(8) Double gates. The gates were 4 feet 3 inches in height, and 4 feet apart.

This was, I think, the biggest jump on the course, and one which required the most skill to negotiate.

(9) An open ditch—steeplechase pattern.

(10) Water.

(11) A sunken road. Here the ground had been scooped out about 3 feet deep, and the "road" was bounded by an ordinary brush fence on the take-off side, about 3 feet in height. On the far side was a rail, 2 feet high, which meant that a horse after having landed over a drop fence, would have to collect himself in one stride, and clear a rail of 5 feet from his take off.

This was a splendid test of both training and horsemanship, and could not have been accomplished by any rider who had landed over the drop fence with his body back.

(12) A footpath. In this case the rails which

bounded it were slightly lower than in the double gates, but further apart, and of course both had to be jumped in one leap. The measurements were : rails 4 feet, and 6 feet away from each other.

These were not quite so difficult to clear as the double gates, because they could be ridden at faster. But still it was a good test of a horse's boldness and jumping capacity.

Every one of these are good, sound, practical tests for both horse and rider, and it seems to me that any horse that can get round a course like this without a fault, is fit to be considered a valuable hunter. In addition to this, it was an easy course for marking purposes. So if it is right *ab hosti docere*, how much more must it be advantageous to learn from our friends.

Before concluding this chapter I want to say that I have often heard it said that, even if continental riders do ride better than us in the showring, we can always show them the way across a natural country. I do not deny this. But the reason is, not because they have perfected their riding in a riding school and have devoted their energies to training themselves and their horses over artificial obstacles, but because they have had no experience in riding to hounds. It is hardly to be expected that any man, however well he rides, will be able to pick up all the intricacies of the hunting field in a moment, or be able to compete on equal terms with men who have hunted all their lives and who know every fence in the countryside.

It is natural that they should be nervous of

doing something wrong and of breaking many of the unwritten laws of hunting. Jumping unknown fences, too, comes strange to a man who has never been able to ride except over made fences; but surely that is to be expected. It would only require experience in hunting to overcome this. Experience in riding they already possess. The knowledge they possess of horsemanship is far ahead of the man who has never ridden except to hounds, and other things being equal, there is no doubt, in my mind, which of the two is the better man.

It is the same with a horse who has never jumped except in the show-ring. He may bungle his fences a little at first, but directly he has accustomed himself to the new conditions, he must be able to cross a country more brilliantly than an ordinary hunter who has not had the same training.

The Marking in the Show-Ring

The best method hitherto adopted is one which has been copied from the French, namely:—

Half a fault for a slight touch.

Two faults for a knock down with the hind feet.

Four faults for a knock down with the fore feet.

But I wish to take the opportunity of suggesting that the principle, sound enough in itself, should be somewhat further developed, and I submit that the following system would be more comprehensive:—

Half fault for a slight touch with the hind feet.

One fault for a slight touch with the fore feet.

Two faults for a knock down with the hind feet.

Four faults for a knock down with the fore feet.

Faults to be cumulative. So that a horse that touched slightly with his fore feet, and knocked down with his hind, should be given two and a half faults, etc.

A horse that knocks any fence down with his knees or breast should be disqualified.

I further suggest that "time" should not be a factor in awarding a prize. It has been urged that if two horses make equally good rounds, the winner should be the one that complete the course in the shortest time.

A contention, which has certainly points in its favour, but which has led to abuse.

It has become rather fashionable for some riders to train their horses to gallop round as fast as possible, and learn to clear the jumps in the best way they can. This can only be taught by knocking the animals about a good deal, by the use of the whip, and by hitting their legs as they jump. It is not an exhibition of skill, it ruins a horse's temper, and is bad from whatever aspect it is viewed. It teaches horses to "scotch" on approaching the fence, and as often as not they jump off their forehand instead of from their hocks, and, in my opinion, the sooner that form of training is abolished the better.

Trick Jumps

Another remark I have often heard is that of calling the obstacles in the show-ring "trick jumps." I have always felt it is a great pity that

such expressions are so common, although the reason for them is obvious.

In a show-ring it is, of course, impossible to have what are called "natural fences." Even if it was possible, what a singularly dull show it would be! The "natural" fence jumped by hunting people is a remarkably small obstacle. It is considered a "stiff" fence if the horse has to clear 3 feet to get over it safely, while a 4-foot jump is left only to the few "thrusters." A stiff post and rails of 4 feet 6 inches would stop the whole field. But when a man gives a polished exhibition in the show-ring by jumping cleanly a five-barred gate 5 feet high, a wall of 4 feet 9 inches, a rail of 4 feet 6 inches, a railway gate in and out, each 4 feet 3 inches high, besides a bush fence or two, and an open ditch (steeplechase pattern), it is called trick jumping!

I do not quite understand why. As long as the hunting public affect to contemn the training necessitated by successful show-ring work, and to look down upon the skill it demands, there is no hope for they themselves to improve. There is no "trick" in teaching a horse to jump a gate, nothing but patience and perseverance is required, and with what object? Nothing else than training both horse and rider to cross a country. Surely a praiseworthy endeavour, whichever way you look upon it, and, as such, should merit the applause and not the contumely of hunting circles.

Some horses are kept entirely for show-ring jumping. Perhaps because, being so highly trained,

the owners don't care to risk them in the hunting field. But that does not alter the position. It is just the same as a prize fruit, which is too good to be eaten. It is mainly displayed as an example of what can be done in fruit-growing, and for the benefit of those who are growing fruit for the market.

No one lifts the finger of scorn at those prize winners, but, on the contrary, show gratitude to them for the lessons that have been learnt from their efforts. So it should be with horses. No one expects to be able to train their hunters to the same standard as that attained by a prize show-jumper. But by seeing what can be done by those who devote their whole time to that particular branch of horsemanship, much can be learnt by the riding public. And if these lessons are applied, as far as possible, on their return to the hunting field, there is, I think, but little doubt that the standard of riding would be greatly improved throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Long-Distance Riding

This is a subject which hardly applies in this country, and on the Continent these competitions which used to be carried out have ceased to a very great extent. But although few people want to ride horses to such extremes, the principles of long-distance riding may often come in, when, for example, riding a tired horse home after a long day's hunting. I have already dwelt with the

"diagonal" when trotting (see p. 140). This alone helps a horse very considerably.

The other points are these :—Never walk. When mounted, the pace should always be the trot, but when it is necessary or desirable to go at a walking pace, always lead. This rule rests both horse and rider, and the distance is accomplished in about the same time. Don't make short halts. Whenever a halt is necessary, see that it is long enough to take the saddle off, so as to rub and dry the back, and if possible water and feed at the same time.

For cavalry work this is very important, and whenever I was doing a long march "on my own" when I had a squadron, I always used to march on those principles, and I found that I not only covered the distance quicker, but both men and horses were much fresher by these means than by any other. Three-quarters of an hour's trot, and one-quarter of an hour "leading," would enable six and three-quarter miles to be covered in the hour. Two hours of this before the midday halt, and two hours after, would represent a twenty-seven mile march, easily and comfortably performed. These are simple rules, and well worthy of consideration.

COLONIAL RIDING

I HAVE been often asked about riding in the colonies, and for an explanation of why, when riding buck-jumpers, long instead of short stirrups are used, and therefore I purpose to devote this chapter partly to those phases of riding.

In the colonies a horse is looked upon in an entirely different way to which he is regarded in Great Britain.

Firstly, they are very cheap and there are plenty of them. People have no time for careful training, and do not regard riding as a luxury, but merely as a means for getting about. As long as a horse is sufficiently docile, he is considered trained. It must be remembered that all the young stock run wild. They get no gentle handling accompanied by sugar and caresses like many youngsters get with us at home. They run wild for some time, and a man, when he first sees one, is a strange and suspicious object. His suspicion is soon developed into positive dislike, not unaccompanied by terror, because his first experience is that of branding, and his second of castration. After this insight into the apparent character of man, his suspicions are confirmed, and he, not without cause, regards mankind as his natural enemy.

Directly he is considered old enough to be broken in to the saddle, he is rounded up, and thrown by the lasso. While lying helpless, but panting and terrified, a saddle is placed on his back, a bit in his mouth, and his dreaded enemy stands over him. At this moment he is unloosed, and assisted to rise by a cut with a whip. No sooner is he on his legs than he realizes a man is on his back. His only idea, then, is to get rid of his enemy, and starts bucking and doing everything he can to obtain his freedom. After his first efforts have proved vain, and he has tired somewhat, the rider starts thrashing him. So his bucking is continued until he is too exhausted to do more, and he stands quiet, dripping with perspiration, and trembling with terror. In most cases his education is now complete. His spirit is broken, and he accepts the mastery of man. It must be remembered that in this contest their strength is not very great. They are only grass-fed, and youngsters, and are very different both in size and strength to horses of a similar age in our country.

This is the origin and reason for the buck-jumper. It is undoubtedly a cruel system, but it is quick and practical, and that is what chiefly interests the colonial, who has neither time nor opportunity for more delicate handling. He only wants to get a horse fit for the duty of cattle ranching in the quickest possible time, and if some break down in the process—well, horses are cheap, and there are others.

Once the horse is docile his education is complete. No thought of bridling and bending and balancing comes into consideration. The real pleasures of riding and horsemanship are unknown. Long distances have to be ridden, and all that is necessary is that the horse should have some form of "tripple" or easy canter, which will get him over the ground in the easiest possible way both for himself and the rider.

The horse in those countries is a conveyance pure and simple, and consequently it is not to those people that we can turn, even living in the saddle as they do, for any guidance in the higher flights of horsemanship.

On the other hand, even the most highly trained horseman brought up in European methods would not be able to sit a good buck-jumper for long, in an ordinary hunting saddle. This is not because the principles of riding which we study are in any way wrong. The principles of balance and seat remain the same always. But in this case it is a question of strength as well as of constant adjustment of balance. If the horse by some sudden movement threw the rider off his balance, only momentarily, no effort of strength would enable him to regain his seat. Each fresh movement would increase his difficulty, and it would be only a question of seconds before he would be deposited on the ground. If great strength were not also used, the balance could not be maintained. So that as even a young grass-fed horse is considerably stronger than a

man, other methods have to be adopted to deal with this particular matter, which, although not in accordance with the best traditions of horsemanship, have been accepted as expedients. The colonial saddle has usually a high pommel upon which the end of the lasso is wound. Some of them have also a high cantle, like a military saddle, and some have very large rolls which not only cover the knee, but also part of the thigh, and there is also a roll behind the thigh, so that the rider is firmly fixed in the saddle. With saddles such as these, the buck-jumper can be mastered with comparative ease. The knees are pressed up under the rolls, and the rider occasionally also holds on to a "monkey" fixed on to the pommel. The reins are not bothered about. The horse has his head completely, and can go where he will. The only object of the rider is to stick on and hold on.

The only point that is of interest from the scientific point of view is the question of the length of stirrup. It may be urged that if the principles that have been disclosed in the preceding articles are correct, it would be necessary to ride buck-jumpers with a very short stirrup, while, actually, they ride very long. But the reason for this is not difficult to explain. The force exercised by the horse is, in this case, not nearly so much of a forward action as upward. I used the simile of a man standing in a railway truck, in my second chapter, showing how in order to anticipate a sudden increase of speed in the

train, and to avoid being thrown backward, he would have to lean forward, and in so doing would have to bend his knees. This simile was used in order to show the necessity for short stirrups. But this case is somewhat different. It is like a man standing on a springboard, with some one underneath causing it at irregular intervals to spring up after it has been pulled down. In such a case it would be unnecessary for the man standing on the end of the board to bend his knees. He would probably keep his balance best by keeping his head very erect, and his legs straight and stiff. So when riding a buck-jumper, as the action is upward and not forward, it is preferable to ride with a long stirrup rather than a short one.

If we look at the attached sketch of a bucking horse, my point will be more clear.

Here we can see the upward as against the forward movement, and the rider takes the strain by firstly fixing his thighs firmly against the knee rolls, and by holding sometimes on to the "monkeys," as short straps attached to the pommel of the saddle are called. Occasionally they even hang on both in front and behind.

In ordinary riding across the prairie or bush, when long distances have to be covered, but when there is no jumping such as we know it in England, they all ride long, and lean well forward. This is undoubtedly a correct attitude for the work they have to do. They have thoroughly grasped the principle that the weight should be kept off the

SKETCH No. 23

This represents an Australian buck-jumper.

Here it will be seen how entirely different this form of "sitting on" is from English riding. The stirrup is quite long, and the rider's leg is practically straight. But the rider gets his pressure by his thigh being fixed by the large rolls both in front and behind.

This attitude answers its purpose because the effort of the horse is all upwards and not lateral.

loins, in all long-distance work. And as they do not expect to meet anything in the nature of a jump, it is certainly more comfortable to ride fairly long, than to attempt the correct seat of an English hunting man. The only obstacles they are likely to meet might be a fallen tree, which would never exceed two feet in height off the ground. These they negotiate by merely leaning forward, and allowing the horse to straggle over it as best he may. It is not a finished exhibition, but it is not intended to be. The rider often loses his stirrup irons, or sometimes, even, deliberately takes his feet from them. The point is that he "gets there," and that is all that is required. The horse he is riding, too, is probably an entirely untrained youngster, and so all the "finesse" which these articles have been advocating are here quite out of place.

I have headed this chapter "Colonial Riding," by which I refer to the stockyards, and that particular form of riding and horse-breaking which people on this side regard as typical overseas. But in and near the large towns like Melbourne or Sydney, where life is more civilized, there is no reason why the riding and horsemanship should not be on similar lines, and reach as high, if not a higher, standard than that which at present obtains in Europe. That they have not already done so is probably due, firstly, to the cowboy influence, and secondly, to the fact that there are few men of leisure who are not too old to interest themselves in such pursuits, and also, perhaps

chiefly, because it has not been the fashion hitherto. But I can strongly recommend my many colonial friends, as well as all lovers of the horse on this side of the water, to study these questions well. They will then find pleasure in even the dullest hack, vistas will be opened to them of which they have never dreamt, new fields of both profit and amusement will develop as they pursue this attractive path, and they will obtain an interest in their stable which they have never had before. All of us who are horse-lovers will do well to survey the past, and see if there is not some way in which we can improve, not only our own riding, but in our methods of training and horse management. The horse is so attractive an animal, if he is only treated properly, no one can help loving him, and no one, once he really understands the temperament of horses, will unnecessarily apply the whip, or countenance any sort of punishment whatever.

I remember seeing a man one day who was riding a young horse to the meet. This horse was very bad at gates, and he came to one which the horse refused to allow him to open with his crop. My friend was the personification of patience. Although he had to spend three-quarters of an hour before he succeeded in attaining his object, he never lost his temper, and only spoke kindly to him the whole time. In the end he succeeded, and that horse never gave him any trouble again over gates. But had he hit his horse, or punished him, he would probably have never succeeded in getting him to take kindly to them. It was only

another example of the folly of punishment. If a horse jumps badly, blame yourself or your training, and try and improve both or either, but don't start hitting him. If horses are impatient, and pull, or fret, then see if the situation cannot be improved by exercise or feeding, but don't put cruel bits into their mouths, or start hitting them over the head. If you find one that is really too much for you, then sell him to some one who can manage him better, and don't be afraid to admit that you can't ride him. There is nothing to be ashamed of in that, but what one should be ashamed of is being seen riding the horse in monstrous bits, which are nothing more or less than instruments of torture.

In the colonies, where time is of importance and horses of none, it may be expedient to break their horses in in the method above described. I have no practical experience whatever, and I have neither the intention nor desire to criticize. I only ask those colonials who have done me the honour of reading these few pages through, to think the matter over again, and see if there cannot be some improvement organized in their training and handling.

After all, there must be progress in the world, and the worst argument that can be proffered is that it always has been done that way. We must reorganize and reconstruct our methods from time to time, and it seems to me that a system of terrorizing and inflicting pain on any animal must, *ipso facto*, have in it the elements and

fundaments of error. For this very reason it should be a subject more ready for reconstructive survey than others which have a sounder basis for their origin.

Now I have come to the conclusion of my task. Briefly summarized, my object in presenting the public with yet another book on riding has been to point out the faults in horsemanship which we see occurring round us every day, to attempt to demonstrate where the faults chiefly lie, and to explain the fundamental principles upon which good riding can be founded. To help those, who lack the necessary experience, in training their horses so as to make them better men across country, and ride to hounds with more enjoyment and greater safety; and to instil a more sympathetic treatment of our horses, whether it be in the *manège* or the stable. It is far more than I can expect to succeed in any of these tasks, but if I have helped only one enthusiast, so as to make him and his horses better than they were before, I shall feel sufficiently rewarded. But if I do more than this: if I have been the cause, however indirectly, of reducing the abuse of both whip and spur, to the encouragement of sympathy and thoughtfulness for those animals that provide us with some of the greatest joys of life, and who are unable to speak for themselves, then I shall be more than rewarded. Horses each have their different natures and characters, and like a successful schoolmaster with his class, they should be

studied. The birch may hang upon the wall as a warning, but the master that uses it admits failure. The good schoolmaster has no need for such recourse (except under very exceptional circumstances), and the same rule applies to the good horsemaster.

Blame yourself before you blame the horse.

For this series of photos I have to thank Mr. J. Birkmeyer, of Ingmanthorpe Hall, Yorkshire.

These photos were taken before the invention of the cinematograph, and their production entailed an immense amount of care, patience and repetition. The results are, however, excellent, and show very clearly the correct method of jumping a fence according to the continental school.

In the rider, note the length of rein throughout, the pointed knee, the perpendicular stirrup leather, the forward poise of the body, and the freedom given to the horse.

My only criticism is that in fig. 6 the foot is a little too far advanced, and that not quite sufficient freedom has been given to the horse's loins on landing.

In the horse, note its temperateness, and trueness of its action. It is cantering, and jumping off the off fore, and landing on the same leg. In spite of the collected way it is jumping, note that it lands well on the far side, quite far enough to clear any ditch that might be there.

Note.—The position of the rider's leg in photograph No. 6 should be noted. It will here be seen that the stirrup leather is not perpendicular, and that the foot has been pushed a little forward. This is the French school, and is what they call the "jambe." In this position the foot is fixed. For the moment it is immovable, and remains so fixed as long as the seat continues in that portion of the saddle. Much as I admire the thoroughness of the French schools, I venture in this particular to disagree with them. I consider that the leather should remain upright, the foot should be further back, and the knee more pointed so as to better absorb the jar of impact.

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